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ON

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ANTONY

LETTERS TO MY GRANDSON

ON

THE GLORY OF ENGLISH PROSE

BY

THE HON. STEPHEN COLERIDGE

THIRD EDITION

"The chief glory of every people arises from its authors."

DR. JOHNSON

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PREFACE

If you have read, gentle reader, the earlier series of *Letters to my Grandson on the World about Him*, you are to understand that in the interval between those letters and these, Antony has grown to be a boy in the sixth form of his public school.

It has not been any longer necessary therefore to study an extreme simplicity of diction in these letters.

My desire has been to lead him into the most glorious company in the world, in the hope that, having early made friends with the noblest of human aristocracy, he will never afterwards admit to his affection and intimacy anything mean or vulgar.

Many young people who, like Antony, are not at all averse from the study of English writers, stand aghast at the vastness of the field before them, and their hearts quail before what seems so gigantic an enterprise.

In these letters I have acted as pilot for a first voyage through what is to a boy an uncharted sea, after which I hope and believe he will have learned happily to steer for himself among the islands of the blest.

S. C.

The Ford,
Chobham.

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LETTERS TO MY GRANDSON

I

My dear Antony,

The letters which I wrote "On the world about you" having shown you that throughout all the universe, from the blazing orbs in infinite space to the tiny muscles of an insect's wing, perfect design is everywhere manifest, I hope and trust that you will never believe that so magnificent a process and order can be without a Mind of which it is the visible expression.

The chief object of those letters was to endorse your natural feeling of reverence for the Great First Cause of all things, with the testimony of your reason; and to save you from ever allowing knowledge of how the sap rises in its stalk to lessen your wonder at and admiration of the loveliness of a flower.

I am now going to write to you about the literature of England and show you, if I can, the immense gulf that divides distinguished writing and speech from vulgar writing and speech.

There is nothing so vulgar as an ignorant use of your own language.

Every Englishman should show that he respects and honours the glorious language of his country, and will not willingly degrade it with his own pen or tongue.

"We have long preserved our constitution," said Dr Johnson; "let us make some struggles for our language."

There is no need to be priggish or fantastic in our choice of words or phrases.

Simple old words are just as good as any that can be selected, if you use them in their proper sense and place.

By reading good prose constantly your ear will come to know the harmony of language, and you will find that your taste will unerringly tell you what is good and what is bad in style, without your being able to explain even to yourself the precise quality that distinguishes the good from the bad.

Any Englishman with a love of his country and a reverence for its language can say things in a few words that will find their way straight into our hearts, Antony, and make us all better men. I will tell you a few of such simple sayings that are better than any more laboured writings.

On the 30th of June 1921, in the *Times* In Memoriam column there was an entry :—"To the undying memory of officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the 9th and 10th battalions of the K.O.Y.L.I.[1] who were killed in the attack on Fricourt in the first battle of the Somme" ; and below it there were placed these splendid words :—

"Gentlemen, when the barrage lifts."

In February of 1913 news reached England of the death, after reaching the South Pole, of four explorers, Captain Scott, their leader, among them.

Shortly before the end Captain Oates, a man of fortune who joined the expedition from pure love of adventure, knowing that his helplessness with frozen feet was retarding the desperate march of the others towards their ship, rose up and stumbled out of the tent into a raging blizzard, saying, "I dare say I shall be away some time."

This was greatly said. His body was never found :

[1] King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

but the rescue party who afterwards discovered the tent with the others dead in it, put up a cairn in the desolate waste of snow with this inscription :—

> " Hereabouts died a very gallant gentleman, Captain L. E. G. Oates, Inniskilling Dragoons, who, on their return from the Pole in March 1912, willingly walked to his death in a blizzard to try and save his comrades beset with hardship."

All this was done, said, and written, very nobly by all concerned.

In St Paul's Cathedral their lies a recumbent effigy of General Gordon, who gave his life for the honour of England at Khartoum, and upon it are engraven these words :—

> " He gave his strength to the weak, his substance to the poor, his sympathy to the suffering, his heart to God."

Even the concentrated terseness of Latin cannot surpass these examples of the power of the simplest and shortest English sentences to penetrate to the heart.

English can be used, by those who master it as an organ of expression, to convey deep emotion under perfect control, than which nothing is more moving, nothing better calculated to refine the mind, nothing more certain to elevate the character.

Whenever a man has something fine to communicate to his fellow-men he has but to use English without affectation, honestly and simply, and he is in possession of the most splendid vehicle of human thought in the world.

All the truly great writers of English speak with simplicity from their hearts, they all evince a spirit of unaffected reverence, they all teach us to look up and not down, and by the nobility of their works which have penetrated into every home where letters are

cultivated, they have done an incalculable service in forming and sustaining the high character of our race.

Clever flippant writers may do a trifling service here and there by ridiculing the pompous and deflating the prigs, but there is no permanence in such work, unless—which is seldom the case—it is totally devoid of personal vanity.

Very little such service is rendered when it emanates from a writer who announces himself as equal if not superior to Shakespeare, and embellishes his lucubrations with parodies of the creeds.

"A Gentleman with a Duster" has in his "Glass of Fashion" shown us that the Society depicted in the books of Colonel Repington and Mrs Asquith is not the true and great Society that sustains England in its noble station among civilised peoples, and we may be sure that neither do these books in the faintest degree represent the true and living literature of the times. They will pass away and be forgotten as utterly as are the fashion plates and missing-word competitions of ten years ago.

Therefore, Antony, be sure that the famous and living literature of England, that has survived all the shocks of time and changes of modern life, is the best and properest study for a man to fit him for life, to refine his taste, to aggravate his wisdom, and consolidate his character.

Your loving old

G. P.

II

My dear Antony,

I alluded, in my first letter to you about English literature, to the necessity of your learning from the beginning the wide distinction between what is good and what is bad style.

I do not know a better instance of a display of the difference between what is fine style and what is not, than may be made by putting side by side almost any sentence from the old authorised translation of the Bible and the same sentence from *The Bible in Modern Speech*.

I will just put two quotations side by side :—

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

"Learn a lesson from the wild lilies. Watch their growth. They neither toil nor spin, and yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his magnificence could array himself like one of these."

Here you can feel the perfect harmony and balance of the old version and the miserable commonplaceness of the effort of these misguided modern men.

Again :—

"Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

This is mauled into :—

"Repent, he said, for the kingdom of the heavens is now close at hand."

These examples are perfectly suited to illustrate the immense difference that separates what is noble and fine in style and what is poor and third rate.

If you recite the old version aloud you cannot escape the harmony and balance of the sentences, and nothing dignified or distinguished can be made of the wretched paraphrases of the two desecrators of the splendid old text.

And, Antony, I would have you know that I, who have spent a long life in precious libraries, loving fine literature with all my heart, have long ago reverenced the old version of the Bible as the granite corner-stone upon which has been built all the noblest English in the world. No narrative in literature has yet surpassed in majesty, simplicity, and passion the story of Joseph and his brethren, beginning at the thirty-seventh and ending with the forty-fifth chapter of Genesis. There is surely nothing more moving and lovely in all the books in the British Museum than the picture of Joseph when he sees his little brother among his brethren :—

> " And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake to me ? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son.
>
> " And Joseph made haste ; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother : and he sought where to weep ; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there."

The whole of the forty-fifth chapter is touching and beautiful beyond all criticism, transcending all art. To read it is to believe every word of it to be true, and to recognise the sublimity of such a relation.

No narrative of the great Greek writers reaches the heart so directly and poignantly as does this astonishing story. It moves swiftly and surely along from incident to incident till Joseph's loving soul can contain itself no more :—

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all of them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me.

"And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

"And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?

"And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover, he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them.

"And after that, his brethren talked with him."

And this wonderful chapter ends thus:—

"And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and is governor over all the land of Egypt.

"And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

"And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived:

"And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."

If you read the story of Joseph through from start to finish, you will see that it is a perfect narrative of the life of a man without fault, who suffered much but without resentment, was great of heart in evil days, and, when Fortune placed him in a position of glory and greatness, showed a stainless magnanimity and a brotherly love that nothing could abate. It is the first and most perfect story in literature of the nobility of man's soul, and as such it must remain a treasured and priceless possession to the world's end.

In the short Book of Ruth there lies embalmed in the finest English a very tender love story, set in all the sweet surroundings of the ripening corn, the

gathered harvest, and the humble gleaners. Nothing can be more delightful than the direction of Boaz, the great land-owner, to his men, after he had espied Ruth in her beauty gleaning in his fields :—

" And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not :

" And let fall also some of the handfuls on purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not."

This little gem in the books of the Bible inspired Hood to write one of his most perfect lyrics :—

" She stood breast high amid the corn
Clasped by the golden light of morn,
Like the sweetheart of the sun,
Who many a glowing kiss had won.

. . . . . .

Thus she stood amid the stooks,
Praising God with sweetest looks.

Sure, I said, Heaven did not mean
Where I reap thou should'st but glean ;
Lay thy sheaf adown and come,
Share my harvest and my home."

That the Bible was translated into English at the time when the language was spoken and written in its most noble form, by men whose style has never been surpassed in strength combined with simplicity, has been a priceless blessing to the English-speaking race. The land of its birth, once flowing with milk and honey, has been for long centuries a place of barren rocks and arid deserts : Persians and Greeks and Romans and Turks have successively swept over it ; the descendants of those who at different times produced its different books are scattered to the ends of the earth ; but the English translation has for long years been the head corner-stone in homes innumerable as the sands of the sea in number.

No upheavals of the earth, no fire, pestilence, famine, or slaughter, can ever now blot it out from the ken of men.

When all else is lost we may be sure that the old English version of the Bible will survive. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

Do not think it enough therefore, Antony, to hear it read badly and without intelligence or emotion, in little detached snippets, in church once a week.

Read it for yourself, and learn to rejoice in the perfect balance, harmony, and strength of its noble style.

Your loving old

G. P.

III

My dear Antony,

I could write you many letters like my last one about the Bible, and perhaps some day I will go back to that wonderful Book and write you some more letters about it; but now I will go on and tell you about some of the great writers of English prose that came after the translation of the Bible.

Those translators were the great founders of the English language, which is probably on the whole the most glorious organ of human expression that the world has yet known.

It blends the classic purity of Greek and the stately severity of Latin with the sanguine passions and noble emotions of our race.

A whole life devoted to its study will not make you or me perfectly familiar with all the splendid passages that have been spoken and written in it. But I shall show in my letters, at least some of the glorious utterances scattered around me here in my library, so that you may recognise, as you ought, the pomp and majesty of the speech of England.

One of the great qualities that was always present in the writings of Englishmen from the time of Elizabeth down to the beginning of the nineteenth century was its restraint.

Those men never became hysterical or lost their perfect self-control.

The deeper the emotion of the writer the more manifest became the noble mastery of himself.

When Sir Walter Ralegh, that glorious son of Devon,

from which county you and I, Antony, are proud to have sprung, lay in the Tower of London awaiting his cowardly and shameful execution the next day at the hands of that miserable James I., writing to his beloved wife, with a piece of coal, because they even denied him pen and ink, face to face with death, he yet observed a calm and noble language that is truly magnifical—to use the old Bible word.

"For the rest," he wrote, "when you have travailed and wearied your thoughts on all sorts of worldly cogitations, you shall sit down by sorrow in the end. Teach your son also to serve and fear God while he is young, that the fear of God may grow up in him. Then will God be a Husband unto you and a Father unto him; a Husband and a Father which can never be taken from you.

"I cannot write much. God knows how hardly I stole this time when all sleep; and it is time to separate my thoughts from the world.

"Beg my dead body, which living was denied you; and either lay it at Sherburne, if the land continue, or in Exeter Church by my father and mother. I can write no more. Time and Death call me away.

"The Everlasting, Infinite, Powerful and Inscrutable God, that Almighty God that is goodness itself, mercy itself, the true life and light, keep you and yours, and have mercy on me and teach me to forgive my persecutors and false accusers, and send us to meet in His Glorious Kingdom. My true wife, farewell. Bless my poor boy, pray for me. My true God hold you both in His Arms.

"Written with the dying hand of, sometime thy husband, but now alas! overthrown, yours that was, but now not my own. WALTER RALEGH."

Sir Walter Ralegh, long before he came to his untimely end, had written in his great *History of the World* a wonderful passage about death; it is justly celebrated, and is familiar to all men of letters throughout the world, so I will quote a portion of it for you :—

"The Kings and Princes of the world have always laid before them the actions, but not the ends, of those great

ones which preceded them. They are always transported with the glory of the one, but they never mind the misery of the other, till they find the experience in themselves.

"They neglect the advice of God, while they enjoy life, or the hope of it; but they follow the counsel of Death upon the first approach. It is he that puts into man all the wisdom of the world, without speaking a word; which God, with all the Words of His Law, promises and threats, doth not infuse.

"Death which hateth and destroyeth man is believed; God which hath made him and loves him is always deferred. It is, therefore, Death alone that can suddenly make man to know himself. He tells the proud and insolent that they are but abjects, and humbles them at the instant; makes them cry, complain and repent; yea, even to hate their fore-passed happiness.

"He takes account of the rich, and proves him a beggar; a naked beggar which hath interest in nothing but in the gravel that fills his mouth. He holds a glass before the eyes of the most beautiful and makes them see therein their deformity and rottenness, and they acknowledge it.

"O eloquent, just and mighty Death! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded; what none have dared thou hast done; and whom all the world have flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised; thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words—HIC JACET."

Sir Walter Ralegh was born only a few miles down below Ottery St Mary, in the same beautiful valley from which you and I, Antony, and the poet have come. The peal of bells in the old church tower at Otterton was given by him to the parish; and when "the lin lan lone of evening bells" floats across between the hills that guard the river Otter, it should fall upon our ears as an echo of the melody that strikes upon our hearts in Ralegh's words.

Your loving old

G. P.

IV

My dear Antony,

In looking through some very old Acts of Parliament not long ago I was rather surprised to find that in those old times our forefathers drew up their statutes in very stately English.

In our own times Acts of Parliament frequently violate the simplest rules of grammar, and are sometimes so unintelligible as to need the labours of learned judges to find out what they mean!

But it seems that in the great days of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth Acts of Parliament were often written in resounding periods of solemn splendour of which the meaning is perfectly clear.

In the twenty-fourth year of the great Henry, the Act denying and forbidding any jurisdiction of the Pope of Rome in England was passed.

This Act, depriving the Pope of all power in England, marked a turning-point in history.

It is headed with these words :—

The Pre-Eminence, Power, and Authority of the King of England. 1532.

"Where by divers sundry old authentic histories and chronicles it is manifestly declared and expressed that this realm of England is an Empire, and so hath been accepted in the world, governed by one supreme head and King having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial crown of the same, unto whom a body politic compact of all sorts and degrees of people, divided in terms and by names of spiritualty and temporalty being bounden and owen to bear next to God a natural and humble obedience ;

he being also institute and furnished by the goodness and sufferance of Almighty God with plenary whole and entire power pre-eminence authority prerogative and jurisdiction to render and yield justice and final determination to all manner of folk residents or subjects within this his realm, in all causes matters debates contentions happening to occur insurge or begin within the limits thereof without restraint or provocation to any foreign princes or potentates of the world . . . all causes testamentary, causes of matrimony and divorces, rights of tithes, oblations and obventions . . . shall be from henceforth heard examined licenced clearly finally and definitely adjudged and determined within the King's jurisdiction and authority and not elsewhere."

The words "Empire" and "Imperial" are in the present day degraded from their ancient high estate by an appropriation of them to advertise soap or cigarettes or what not. Henry VIII., we may be sure, would never have allowed these solemn words to be used by people with something to sell.

They were great people who could draw up their statutes in splendid passages of sustained nobility.

Let us, Antony, salute them across the centuries.

Your loving old

G. P.

V

My dear Antony,

One of the great creators of English prose who lived at the same time as Ralegh and Shakespeare was Richard Hooker, who is generally known as "the Judicious Hooker."

He was born in Devon, two years after Ralegh, in 1554.

He must very early in life have made his mark as a man of learning and piety, for when he was only thirty-one he was made Master of the Temple. The controversies in which he there found himself involved induced him to retire when he was only thirty-seven into the country, for the purpose of writing his famous book, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.

It is the first great book on the English Church, and it is full of magnificent prose. It was divided into eight parts; and in the first one, before he had got far into it, he penned the exclamatory description of law which will live as long as the language:—

> "Her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world; all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, the greatest as not exempted from her power."

And in the same first part will be found a passage on the Deity which portrays faithfully for us the humble wisdom of both the man and his age:—

> "Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High; whom although to know be life, and joy to make mention of His name; yet

our soundest knowledge is to know that we know Him not as indeed He is, neither can know Him; and our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence, when we confess without confession that His glory is inexplicable, His greatness above our capacity to reach. He is above and we upon earth; therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few."

Shakespeare was born ten years later than Hooker, in 1564, and his share in founding English prose as we know it is, of course, not comparable with that of Hooker, for of Shakespeare's prose there remains for us but little. Whenever he rose to eloquence he clothed himself in verse as with an inevitable attribute, but on the rare occasions when he condescended to step down from the great line to "the other harmony of prose" he is as splendid as in all else. In *Hamlet* we have this sudden passage :—

"I have of late, (but wherefore I know not), lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me, than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours.

"What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust?"

And the most beautiful letter in the world is that written by Antonio to Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*. When it is remembered that it was out of his friendship for Bassanio that Antonio entered into his bond with Shylock, the supreme exquisiteness of the few words from friend to friend render this letter unsurpassable :—

"Sweet Bassanio, my ships have all miscarried, my creditors grow cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit, and since, in paying it, it is impossible I should live, all debts are cleared between you and me if I might see you at my death; notwithstanding, use your pleasure; if your love do not persuade you to come, let not my letter."

Well did Shakespeare know that such a letter must make an instant appeal to the sweet heart of Portia: "O love!" she cries, "despatch all business, and be gone!"

All great poets are masters of a splendid prose, and had Shakespeare written some notable work of prose we may be sure it would even have surpassed the noble utterances of all his wonderful contemporaries.

It has been said that no language in the world has yet ever lasted in its integrity for over a thousand years. Perhaps printing may confer a greater stability on present languages; but whenever English is displaced, the sun of the most glorious of all days will have set.

Your loving old

G. P.

VI

My dear Antony,

I do not think that men of letters often search through the old law reports for specimens of fine prose, but I believe that here and there, in that generally barren field, a nugget of pure gold may be discovered by an industrious student.

Much noble prose delivered from the bench down the centuries has been lost for ever, for the judges of England have often been gentlemen of taste, scholarship, and eloquence. I have found one very splendid passage that has somehow survived the wrecks of nearly four hundred years.

Lord Chief Justice Crewe, who became Chief Justice of England in 1624, delivered in the case of the Earl of Oxford the following noble tribute to the great house of De Vere :—

> "I heard a great peer of this realm, and learned, say, when he lived, there was no king in Christendom had such a subject as Oxford. He came in with the Conqueror, Earl of Guienne ; shortly after the Conquest made Great Chamberlain, above 400 years ago, by Henry I., the Conqueror's son ; confirmed by Henry II. This great honour —this high and noble dignity—hath continued ever since, in the remarkable surname De Vere, by so many ages, descents, and generations, as no other kingdom can produce such a peer in one and the selfsame name and title. I find in all this time but two attainders of this noble family, and those in stormy and tempestuous time, when the government was unsettled, and the kingdom in competition. I have laboured to make a covenant with myself, that affection may not press upon judgment, for

I suppose that there is no man that hath any apprehension of gentry or nobleness, but his affection stands to the continuance of so noble a name and fame, and would take hold of a twig or twine-thread to uphold it. And yet Time hath his revolutions : there must be an end to all temporal things, *finis rerum*,—and end of names and dignities, and whatsoever is *terrene* ; and why not of De Vere ? For where is De Bohun ?—where is Mowbray ?—where is Mortimer ? Nay, what is more and most of all, where is Plantagenet ? They are entombed in the urns and sepulchres of mortality. And yet, let the name and dignity of De Vere stand so long as it pleases God."

And alas ! we can now ask, Where is De Vere ? This great Earldom of Oxford was created in 1142, and has disappeared long ago in the limbo of peerages said to be in abeyance.

In these days, Antony, when peerages are bought by men successful in trade and sold by men successful in intrigue, such elevations in rank have ceased to be regarded as the necessary concomitants of " great honour " and " high and noble dignity " ; so that it has long been more reputable in the House of Lords to be a descendant than an ancestor. But among the older great families there still remains a pride that has descended unsullied through many generations, which serves as a fine deterrent from evil deeds, and a constant incentive to honour—and in England the history of great names can never be totally ignored.

Nothing is more ridiculous and cheap than to sneer at honourable descent from famous ancestors ; it divertingly illustrates the fable of the sour grapes.

Your loving old

G. P.

VII

My dear Antony,

You will have seen from the extracts I have already quoted to you of the writers of the Elizabethan age that the style of all of them possesses something large and resonant, something that may be said to constitute the "grand style" in prose; and this quite naturally without effort, and without the slightest touch of affectation.

A great writer who came immediately after the Elizabethans—namely, Sir Thomas Browne, who lived from 1605 to 1682—displays the development in his style of something less simple and more precious than ruled in the former generation.

It is difficult to select any passage from his works where all is so good. He was curious and exact in his choice of words and commanded a wide vocabulary. There is deliberate ingenuity in the framing of his sentences, which arrests attention and markedly distinguishes his style. His *Urn Burial*, in spite of its elaboration, reaches a grave and solemn splendour.

The fifth chapter, which begins by speaking of the dead who have "quietly rested under the drums and tramplings of three conquests," rises to a very noble elevation as English prose.

Here I quote one paragraph of it, characteristic of the whole :—

> "Darkness and light divide the course of time, and oblivion shares with memory a great part even of our living beings; we slightly remember our felicities, and the smartest strokes of affliction leave but short smart upon us. Sense endureth no extremities, and sorrows

destroy us or themselves. To weep into stones are fables. Afflictions induce callosities; miseries are slippery, or fall like snow upon us, which notwithstanding is no unhappy stupidity. To be ignorant of evils to come, and forgetful of evils past, is a merciful provision in nature, whereby we digest the mixture of our few and evil days, and, our delivered senses not relapsing into cutting remembrances, our sorrows are not kept raw by the edge of repetitions. A great part of antiquity contented their hopes of subsistency with a transmigration of their souls,—a good way to continue their memories, while having the advantage of plural successions they could not but act something remarkable in such variety of beings, and, enjoying the fame of their passed selves, make accumulation of glory unto their last durations. Others, rather than be lost in the uncomfortable night of nothing, were content to recede into the common being, and make one particle of the public soul of all things, which was no more than to return into their unknown and divine original again. Egyptian ingenuity was more unsatisfied, contriving their bodies in sweet consistencies, to attend the return of their souls. But all was vanity, feeding the wind, and folly. The Egyptian mummies, which Cambyses or Time hath spared, avarice now consumeth. Mummy is become merchandise. Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams."

Milton was a contemporary of Sir Thomas Browne, and, like all great poets, was a master of resounding prose. All that he wrote, both in verse and prose, is severely classic in its form. His *Samson Agonistes* is perhaps the finest example of a play written in English after the manner of the Greek dramas.

Milton wrote *The Areopagitica* in defence of the liberty of publishers and printers of books. And it stands for all time as the first and greatest argument against interference with the freedom of the press.

The Areopagitæ were judges at Athens in its more flourishing time, who sat on Mars Hill and made decrees and passed sentences which were delivered in public and commanded universal respect.

I will quote one of the finest passages in this great and splendid utterance :—

"I deny not but that it is of greatest concernment in the Church and Commonwealth to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves as well as men ; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors : for books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are ; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous dragons' teeth ; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men.

"And yet on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book ; who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image ; but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself ; kills the Image of God as it were in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth ; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit ; embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life.

"'Tis true, no age can restore a life, whereof, perhaps, there is no great loss ; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse.

"We should be wary, therefore, what persecutions we raise against the living labours of public men ; how we spill that seasoned life of man preserved and stored up in books ; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom, and, if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at that ethereal and fifth essence, the breath of reason itself ; slays an immortality rather than a life."

This is a fine defence of the inviolability of a good and proper book.

A bad book will generally die of itself, but there is something horribly malignant about a wicked book,

as it must always be worse than a wicked man, for a man can repent, but a book cannot.

It is the men of letters who keep alive the books of the great from generation to generation, and they are never likely to preserve a wicked book from oblivion.

Your loving old

G. P.

VIII

My dear Antony,

Milton, of whom I wrote in my last letter, was five years older than Jeremy Taylor, of whom I am going to write to-day. The latter's writings differ very much from Milton's, although they were contemporaries for the whole of the former's life.

From the grave and august periods of Milton to the sweet beauty of Jeremy Taylor is as the passing from out the austere halls of Justice to lovely fields full of flowers.

Your and my great kinsman, Coleridge, pronounced Jeremy Taylor to be the most eloquent of all divines ; and Coleridge was a great critic.

Indeed, there seems to dwell permanently in Jeremy Taylor's mind a compelling sweetness and serenity.

His parables, though sometimes perhaps almost of set purpose fanciful, are always full of beauty.

How can anyone withhold sympathy and affection from the writer of such a passage as this :—

> " But as, when the sun approaches towards the gates of the morning, he first opens a little eye of heaven, and sends away the spirits of darkness, and gives light to a cock, and calls up the lark to matins, and by and by gilds the fringes of a cloud, and peeps over the eastern hills, thrusting out his golden horns, like those which decked the brows of Moses when he was forced to wear a veil because himself had seen the face of God ; and still, while a man tells the story, the sun gets up higher, till he shows a fair face and a full light, and then he shines one whole day, under a cloud often, and sometimes weeping great and little showers, and sets quickly, so is a man's reason and his life."

Again :—

" No man can tell but he that loves his children, how many delicious accents make a man's heart dance in the pretty conversation of those dear pledges ; their childishness, their stammering, their little angers, their innocence, their imperfections, their necessities, are so many little emanations of joy and comfort to him that delights in their persons and society ; but he that loves not his wife and children, feeds a lioness at home, and broods a nest of sorrows ; and blessing itself cannot make him happy ; so that all the commandments of God enjoining a man to 'love his wife' are nothing but so many necessities and capacities of joy. 'She that is loved, is safe ; and he that loves, is joyful.' Love is a union of all things excellent; it contains in it proportion and satisfaction, and rest and confidence."

Again :—

" So have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven, and climb above the clouds ; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest, than it could recover by the liberation and frequent weighing of his wings ; till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over ; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing, as if it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed sometimes through the air, about his ministries here below ; so is the prayer of a good man."

Again :—

" I am fallen into the hands of publicans and sequestrators, and they have taken all from me ; what now? Let me look about me. They have left me the sun and moon, fire and water, a loving wife, and many friends to pity me, and some to relieve me, and I can still discourse ; and unless I list, they have not taken away my merry countenance and my cheerful spirit, and a good conscience ; they still have left me the Providence of God, and all the

promises of the Gospel, and my religion, and my hopes of heaven, and my charity to them too ; and still I sleep and digest, I eat and drink, I read and meditate ; I can walk in my neighbour's pleasant fields, and see the varieties of natural beauties, and delight in all that in which God delights, that is, in virtue and wisdom, in the whole creation, and in God Himself."

Here, Antony, is true wisdom. True, indeed, is it that no one can take away from you your merry countenance, your cheerful spirit, and your good conscience unless you choose ; keep all three, Antony, throughout your life, and you will be happy yourself and make everyone about you happy, and that is to make a little heaven of your earthly home.

Your loving old

G. P.

IX

My dear Antony,

Some day, no doubt, you will read some of the celebrated diaries that have come down to us. The best known of such books is *Pepys's Diary*, which was written in a kind of short-hand, and so lay undeciphered from his death in 1703 for more than a century. One of its merits is its absolute self-revelation; for Pepys exposes to us his character without a shadow of reserve in all its vanity; and the other is the faithful picture it gives us of the time of the Restoration.

But, though less popular, *Evelyn's Diary* is, I think, in many ways superior to that of Pepys.[1]

There is a quiet, unostentatious dignity about Evelyn which is altogether absent in the garrulous Pepys, and, indeed I find something very beautiful and touching in the grief Evelyn pours forth upon the death of his little son of five years old :—

> "The day before he died," writes Evelyn, "he call'd to me and in a more serious manner than usual, told me that for all I loved him so dearly I should give my house, land, and all my fine things, to his Brother Jack, he should have none of them; and next morning when he found himself ill, and that I persuaded him to keepe his hands in bed, he demanded whether he might pray to God with his hands un-joyn'd; and a little after, whilst in great agonie, whether he should not offend God by using His holy name so often calling for ease. What shall I say of his frequent pathetical ejaculations utter'd of himselfe: Sweete Jesus save me,

[1] Another diary that you should read by and by is that of Henry Crabb Robinson.

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deliver me, pardon my sinns, let Thine angels receive me!

"So early knowledge, so much piety and perfection! But thus God having dress'd up a Saint for himselfe, would not longer permit him with us, unworthy of ye future fruites of this incomparable hopefull blossome. Such a child I never saw: for such a child I blesse God in whose bosome he is! May I and mine become as this little child, who now follows the child Jesus that Lamb of God in a white robe whithersoever he goes; even so, Lord Jesus, *fiat voluntas tua!* Thou gavest him to us, Thou hast taken him from us, blessed be ye name of ye Lord! That I had anything acceptable to Thee was from Thy grace alone, since from me he had nothing but sin, but that Thou hast pardon'd! Blessed be my God for ever, Amen! I caused his body to be coffin'd in lead, and reposited on the 30th at 8 o'clock that night in the church at Deptford, accompanied with divers of my relations and neighbours among whom I distributed rings with this motto: *Dominus abstulit*; intending, God willing, to have him transported with my owne body to be interr'd in our dormitory in Wotton Church, in my dear native county of Surrey, and to lay my bones and mingle my dust with my fathers, if God be gracious to me and make me fit for Him as this blessed child was. The Lord Jesus sanctify this and all my other afflictions, Amen!

"Here ends the joy of my life, and for which I go even mourning to my grave."

This great love and reverence for little children is peculiarly in accord with Christianity, for we should remember that it was the WISE men, who, when they had journeyed far across the world to salute the King of kings, laid their offerings down at the feet of a little child.

Is there not something to reverence in faith and resignation such as are here expressed by Evelyn? Were not these men of old with their unshakable faith and simple piety better and happier than those who in these days know so much more and believe so much less?

We, no doubt, have the knowledge, but perhaps they had the wisdom.

I think, Antony, that in the history of England we shall have difficulty in finding any of our greatest men whose hearts and minds were not filled with a reverence for God.

All who have acted most nobly from the days of Ralegh and Sir Thomas More, down to the days of Gordon of Khartoum, and down again to our own days when the youth of England upheld the invincible valour, self-sacrifice, and glory of their race in the greatest of all wars,—all have been filled with the love of God and have found therein a perfect serenity in the face of death, and that peace which passeth all understanding.

The character of our race rests indubitably upon that faith, and he who lifts his voice, or directs his pen, to tear it down, had better never have been born.

Your loving old

G. P.

X

My dear Antony,

In these letters I am never going to quote to you anything that does not seem to me to rise to a level of merit well above ordinary proper prose. There are many writers whose general correctness and excellence is not to be questioned or denied whom I shall not select in these letters for your particular admiration.

By and by, when your own love of literature impels you to excursions in all directions, you may perhaps come to differ from my judgment, for everyone's taste must vary a little from that of others.

English prose in its excellence follows the proportions manifested by the contours of the elevation of the world's land.

Vast tracts lie very near the sea-level, of such are the interminable outpourings of newspapers and novels and school books. And, as each ascent from the sea-level is reached, less and less land attains to it, and when the snow-line is approached only a very small proportion indeed of the land aspires so high.

So among writers, those who climb to the snow-line are a slender band compared to all the inhabitants of the lower slopes and plains.

In these letters I do not intend to mistake a pedlar for a mountaineer, nor a hearthstone for a granite peak. Time slowly buries deep in oblivion the writings of the industrious and the dull.

Born fifteen years later than Jeremy Taylor, of whom I wrote in a former letter, John Bunyan in 1660, being a Baptist, suffered the persecution then the lot of all

dissenters, and was cast into Bedford gaol, where he lay for conscience' sake for twelve years. "As I walked through the wilderness of this world," said he, "I lighted on a certain place where was a den, and laid me down in that place to sleep; and as I slept I dreamed a dream"; and the dream which he dreamed has passed into all lands, and has been translated into all languages, and has taken its place with the Bible and with the *Imitation of Christ* as a guide of life.

The force of simplicity finds here its most complete expression; the story wells from the man's heart, whence come all great things :—

"Then said the Interpreter to Christian, 'Hast thou considered all these things?'

"*Christian.* 'Yes, and they put me in hope and fear.'

"*Interpreter.* 'Well, keep all things so in thy mind that they may be as a goad in thy sides, to prick thee forward in the way thou must go.'

"Then Christian began to gird up his loins, and to address himself to his journey.

"Then said the Interpreter, 'The Comforter be always with thee, good Christian, to guide thee in the way that leads to the city.'

"So Christian went on his way.

"Now I saw in my dream that the highway up which Christian had to go was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall was called Salvation. Up this way, therefore, did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back. He ran thus till he came at a place somewhat ascending, and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below in the bottom a sepulchre.

"So I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.

"Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, 'He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death.'

"Then he stood awhile to look and wonder, for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burden.

"He looked, therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks."

Bunyan died in 1688, and Dr Johnson was born in 1709. Many years, therefore, elapsed between the time when they each displayed their greatest powers.

You will have noticed, Antony, that all the writers whom I have quoted, and who reached the true nobility of speech necessary to command our tribute of unstinted praise, have been men of manifest piety and reverence. And you will find it difficult to discover really great and eloquent prose from the pen of any man whose heart is not filled with a simple faith in the goodness of God.

Your loving old

G. P.

XI

My dear Antony,

I have come now to Dr Johnson, and it is almost a test of a true man of letters that he should love him.

He was rugged and prejudiced, but magnanimous; impatient with the presumptuous, tender to modest ignorance, proudly independent of the patronage of the great, and was often doing deeds of noble self-sacrifice by stealth.

Through long years of hard, unremitting toil for his daily bread he lived bravely and sturdily, with no extraneous help but his stout oak stick—an unconquerable man.

His prose rises on occasion to a measured and stately grandeur above the reach of any of his contemporaries.

It was not often that he unveiled to the public gaze the beatings of his own noble heart, or invited the world to contemplate the depression and suffering amid which his unending labours were accomplished.

The concluding page of the preface to the first edition of the great *Dictionary* is, therefore, the more precious and moving. I know not why this majestic utterance came to be deleted in later editions; certainly it sanctifies, and as it were crowns with a crown of sorrow, the greatest work of his life; and with reverent sympathy and unstinted admiration I reproduce it here :—

> "Life may be lengthened by care, though death cannot ultimately be defeated: tongues, like governments, have

a natural tendency to degeneration: we have long preserved our constitution, let us make some struggles for our language.

"In hope of giving longevity to that which its own nature forbids to be immortal, I have devoted this book, the labour of years, to the honour of my country, that we may no longer yield the palm of philology to the nations of the continent. The chief glory of every people arises from its authors; whether I shall add anything by my own writings to the reputation of English literature, must be left to time: much of my life has been lost under the pressure of disease; much has been trifled away; and much has always been spent in provision for the day that was passing over me; but I shall not think my employment useless or ignoble, if by my assistance foreign nations, and distant ages, gain access to the propagators of knowledge, and understand the teachers of truth; if my labours afford light to the repositories of science, and add celebrity to Bacon, to Hooker, to Milton, and to Boyle.

"When I am animated by this wish, I look with pleasure on my book, however defective, and deliver it to the world with the spirit of a man that has endeavoured well. That it will immediately become popular I have not promised to myself: a few wild blunders and risible absurdities, from which no work of such multiplicity was ever free, may for a time furnish folly with laughter, and harden ignorance in contempt; but useful diligence will at last prevail, and there never can be wanting some, who distinguish desert, who will consider that no dictionary of a living tongue can ever be perfect, since while it is hastening to publication, some words are budding, and some falling away; that a whole life cannot be spent upon syntax and etymology, and that even a whole life would not be sufficient; that he whose design includes whatever language can express must often speak of what he does not understand; that a writer will sometimes be hurried by eagerness to the end, and sometimes faint with weariness under a task which Scaliger compares to the labours of the anvil and the mine; that what is obvious is not always known, and what is known is not always present; that sudden fits of inadvertency will surprise vigilance, slight avocations will

seduce attention, and casual eclipses of the mind will darken learning; and that the writer shall often in vain trace his memory at the moment of need for that which yesterday he knew with intuitive readiness, and which will come uncalled into his thoughts to-morrow.

"In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted, let it not be forgotten that much likewise is performed; and though no book was ever spared out of tenderness to the author, and the world is little solicitous to know whence proceeded the faults of that which it condemns, yet it may gratify curiosity to inform it that the *English Dictionary* was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academic bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow; and it may repress the triumph of malignant criticism to observe, that if our language is not here fully displayed, I have only failed in an attempt which no human powers have hitherto completed. If the lexicons of ancient tongues, now immutably fixed and comprised in a few volumes, be yet, after the toil of successive ages, inadequate and delusive; if the aggregated knowledge and co-operating diligence of the Italian academicians did not secure them from the censure of Beni; if the embodied critics of France, when fifty years had been spent upon their work, were obliged to change its economy, and give their second editions another form, I may surely be contented without the praise of perfection which, if I could obtain, in this gloom of solitude what would it avail me?

"I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave, and success and miscarriage are empty sounds; I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise."

This seems to me to be the noblest passage that Johnson ever wrote.

Almost all the most magnificent utterances of man are tinged with sadness. In this they possess a quality that is almost inseparable from grandeur

wherever displayed. No man of sensibility and taste feels it possible to make jokes himself, or to tolerate them from others when in the presence of the Falls of Niagara, or a tempest at sea, or when he views from a peak in the Andes—as I have done—the sun descend into the Pacific. The greatest pictures painted by man touch the heart rather than elate it; and genius finds its highest expression not in comedy, but in tragedy.

And this need cause us no surprise when we consider how much of the great work in letters and in art is directly due to the writer possessing in full measure the gift of sympathy.

People with this gift, even if they are without the faculty of expression, are beloved by those about them, which must bring them happiness.

Till he was over fifty Dr Johnson's life was a weary struggle with poverty. He wrote *Rasselas* under the pressure of an urgent need of money to send to his dying mother. His wife died some few years earlier. I have always thought that the sad reflections he put into the mouth of an old philosopher towards the end of the story were indeed the true expressions of his own tired heart :—

> "Praise," said the sage with a sigh, "is to an old man an empty sound. I have neither mother to be delighted with the reputation of her son, nor wife to partake the honours of her husband.
>
> "I have outlived my friends and my rivals. Nothing is now of much importance; for I cannot extend my interest beyond myself. Youth is delighted with applause, because it is considered as the earnest of some future good, and because the prospect of life is far extended; but to me, who am now declining to decrepitude, there is little to be feared from the malevolence of men, and yet less to be hoped from their affection or esteem. Something they may take away, but they can give me nothing. Riches would now be useless, and high employment would be pain. My retrospect of life recalls to my view many

opportunities of good neglected, much time squandered upon trifles, and more lost in idleness and vacancy. I leave many great designs unattempted, and many great attempts unfinished.

"My mind is burdened with no heavy crime, and therefore I compose myself to tranquillity; endeavour to abstract my thoughts from hopes and cares, which, though reason knows them to be vain, still try to keep their old possession of the heart; expect, with serene humility, that hour which nature cannot long delay; and hope to possess, in a better state, that happiness which here I could not find, and that virtue which here I have not attained."

From the results of *Rasselas* he sent his mother money, but she had expired before it reached her.

Down to the time of Dr Johnson it was the custom for writers of books and poems to seek and enjoy the patronage of some great nobleman, to whom they generally dedicated their works.

And in pursuance of that custom Dr Johnson, when he first issued the plan or prospectus of his great *Dictionary* in 1747, addressed it to Lord Chesterfield, who was regarded as the most brilliant and cultivated nobleman of his time. Lord Chesterfield, however, took no notice of the matter till the *Dictionary* was on the point of coming out in 1755, and then wrote some flippant remarks about it in a publication called *The World.*

At this Dr Johnson wrote a letter to the condescending peer, which became celebrated throughout England and practically put an end to writers seeking the patronage of the great.

This wonderful letter concludes thus :—

"Seven years, my lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without

one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

"The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

"Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

"Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my lord,—your lordship's most humble, most obedient servant. SAM. JOHNSON."

Boswell's life of Dr Johnson when you come to read it, as you will be sure to do by and by, has left a living picture of this great and good man for all future generations to enjoy, extenuating nothing of his quaintness, directness, and proneness to contradiction for its own sake, yet unveiling everywhere the deep piety and fine magnanimity of his character.

He suffered much, but never complained, and certainly must be numbered among the great men of letters who have found true consolation and support in every circumstance of life in an earnest and fervent faith.

Your loving old

G. P.

XII

My dear Antony,

Edmund Burke was born in 1730, and therefore was twenty-one years younger than Dr Johnson, and he survived him thirteen years. He was a great prose writer, and although some of his speeches in Parliament that have come down to us possess every quality of solid argument and lofty eloquence, there must have been something lacking in his delivery and voice, for he so frequently failed to rivet the attention of the House, and so often addressed a steadily dwindling audience, that the wits christened him "the dinner bell."

All men of letters, however, acknowledge Burke as a true master of a very great style.

We see in him the first signs of a breaking away from the universal restraint of the older writers, and of the surging up of expressed emotion.

His splendid tribute to Marie Antoinette and his panegyric of the lost age of chivalry are familiar to all students of English prose.

> "It is now (1791) sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in—glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendour, and joy. Oh! what a revolution! and what a heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that

she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry has gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever.

"Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyalty to sex and rank, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise is gone!

"It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound; which inspired courage while it mitigated ferocity; which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness."

This is a splendid and world-famous passage well worth committing to memory.

Your loving old

G. P.

XIII

My dear Antony,

Edward Gibbon, who wrote the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, belonged to the later half of the eighteenth century, and was a contemporary of Dr Johnson and Burke. He finished his great history three years after Dr Johnson's death. It is a monumental work, and will live as long as the English language. It is one of the books which every cultivated gentleman should read. The style is stately and sonorous, and the industry and erudition involved in its production must have been immense.

Although it never sinks below a noble elevation of style, it nevertheless displays no uplifting flights of eloquence or declamation, and to me, and probably to you, Antony, the most moving passages in Gibbon's writings are those that describe with unaffected emotion the moment of the first resolve to compose the great history and the night when he wrote the last line of it. On page 129 of his memoirs[1] he wrote :—

> "It was at Rome on the 15th of October, 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted fryars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind."

Thus did he resolve to devote himself to the tremendous task, and at Lausanne twenty-three years later it was at last fulfilled. He recorded the event

[1] First edition, 1794.

in a few pregnant sentences that are strangely memorable :—

> " It was on the day, or rather night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page, in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen I took several turns in a berceau, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps, the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind, by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that, whatsoever might be the future fate of my History, the life of the historian must be short and precarious."

In June 1888, just one hundred and one years after that pen had been finally laid aside, I searched in Lausanne for the summer-house and covered walk, and could find no very authentic record of its site. I brought home a flower from the garden where it seemed probable the summer-house had once existed, behind the modern hotel built there in the intervening time, and laid it between the leaves of my Gibbon.

The pressed flower was still there when I last took the book down from my shelves.

I hope my successors will preserve the little token of my reverence.

Your loving old

G. P.

XIV

My dear Antony,

Some of the most eloquent orators in the world have been Irishmen, and among them Henry Grattan was supreme.

The Irish Parliament in the later half of the eighteenth century frequently sat spellbound under the magic of his voice.

In 1782, at the age of thirty-two, he achieved by his amazing eloquence a great National Revolution in Ireland. But eighteen years later all that he had fought for and achieved was lost in the Act of Union. In these days I suppose few will be found to defend the means whereby that Act was passed; but the public assertions that the people of Ireland were in favour of it wrung from Grattan the following cry of indignation and wrath:—

> "To affirm that the judgment of a nation is erroneous may mortify, but to affirm that her judgment *against* is *for*; to assert that she has said *ay* when she has pronounced *no*; to affect to refer a great question to the people; finding the sense of the people, like that of the parliament, against the question, to force the question; to affirm the sense of the people to be *for* the question; to affirm that the question is persisted in, because the sense of the people is for it; to make the falsification of the country's sentiments the foundation of her ruin, and the ground of the Union; to affirm that her parliament, constitution, liberty, honour, property, are taken away by her own authority,—there is, in such artifice, an effrontery, a hardihood, an insensibility, that can best be answered by sensations of astonishment and disgust, excited on this occasion by the

British minister, whether he speaks in gross and total ignorance of the truth, or in shameless and supreme contempt for it.

"The constitution may be *for a time* so lost; the character of the country cannot be so lost. The ministers of the Crown will, or may, perhaps, at length find that it is not so easy to put down for ever an ancient and respectable nation, by abilities, however great, and by power and by corruption, however irresistible; liberty may repair her golden beams, and with redoubled heat animate the country; the cry of loyalty will not long continue against the principles of liberty; loyalty is a noble, a judicious, and a capacious principle; but in these countries loyalty, distinct from liberty, is corruption, not loyalty.

"The cry of the connexion will not, in the end, avail against the principles of liberty. Connexion is a wise and a profound policy; but connexion without an Irish Parliament is connexion without its own principle, without analogy of condition; without the pride of honour that should attend it; is innovation, is peril, is subjugation—not connexion.

"The cry of the connexion will not, in the end, avail against the principle of liberty.

"Identification is a solid and imperial maxim, necessary for the preservation of freedom, necessary for that of empire; but, without union of hearts—with a separate government, and without a separate parliament, identification is extinction, is dishonour, is conquest—not identification.

"Yet I do not give up the country—I see her in a swoon, but she is not dead—though in her tomb she lies helpless and motionless, still there is on her lips a spirit of life, and on her cheeks a glow of beauty—

> "Thou art not conquered; beauty's ensign yet
> Is crimson in thy lips, and in thy cheeks,
> And death's pale flag is not advanced there."

"While a plank of the vessel sticks together, I will not leave her. Let the courtier present his flimsy sail, and carry the light bark of his faith, with every new breath of wind—I will remain anchored here—with fidelity to the

fortunes of my country, faithful to her freedom, faithful to her fall."

Of another character, but not less admirable than his eloquence in the Senate, was Grattan's achievement with the pen. His description of the great Lord Chatham lives as one of the most noble panegyrics—if not the most noble—in the world. No writer, before or since, has offered anyone such splendid homage as this—that he never sunk "to the vulgar level of the great."

"The Secretary stood alone. Modern degeneracy had not reached him. Original and unaccommodating, the features of his character had the hardihood of antiquity, his august mind overawed majesty, and one of his sovereigns thought royalty so impaired in his presence that he conspired to remove him, in order to be relieved from his superiority. No state chicanery, no narrow systems of vicious politics, no idle contest for ministerial victories sunk him to the vulgar level of the great; but, overbearing, persuasive, and impracticable, his object was England,—his ambition was fame; without dividing, he destroyed party; without corrupting, he made a venal age unanimous; France sunk beneath him; with one hand he smote the House of Bourbon, and wielded in the other the democracy of England. The sight of his mind was infinite, and his schemes were to affect, not England, not the present age only, but Europe and posterity. Wonderful were the means by which these schemes were accomplished, always seasonable, always adequate, the suggestions of an understanding animated by ardour, and enlightened by prophecy.

"The ordinary feelings which make life amiable and indolent—those sensations which soften, and allure, and vulgarise—were unknown to him; no domestic difficulties, no domestic weakness reached him; but, aloof from the sordid occurrences of life, and unsullied by its intercourse, he came occasionally into our system to counsel and decide.

"A character so exalted, so strenuous, so various, so

authoritative, astonished a corrupt age, and the Treasury trembled at the name of Pitt through all her classes of venality. Corruption imagined, indeed, that she had found defects in this statesman, and talked much of the inconsistency of his glory, and much of the ruin of his victories—but the history of his country, and the calamities of the enemy, answered and refuted her.

"Nor were his political abilities his only talents; his eloquence was an era in the senate, peculiar and spontaneous, familiarly expressing gigantic sentiments and instinctive wisdom—not like the torrent of Demosthenes, or the splendid conflagration of Tully; it resembled sometimes the thunder, and sometimes the music of the spheres. Like Murray, he did not conduct the understanding through the painful subtilty of argumentation; nor was he, like Townshend, for ever on the rack of exertion, but rather lightened upon the subject, and reached the point by the flashings of his mind, which, like those of his eye, were felt, but could not be followed.

"Yet he was not always correct or polished; on the contrary, he was sometimes ungrammatical, negligent, and unenforcing, for he concealed his art, and was superior to the knack of oratory. Upon many occasions he abated the vigour of his eloquence, but even then, like the spinning of a cannon ball, he was still alive with fatal, unapproachable activity.

"Upon the whole, there was in this man something that could create, subvert, or reform; an understanding, a spirit, and an eloquence to summon mankind to society, or to break the bonds of slavery asunder, and rule the wildness of free minds with unbounded authority; something that could establish or overwhelm empire, and strike a blow in the world that should resound through its history."

Grattan died in 1820, and twenty years later, in 1844, another great English writer, Lord Macaulay, wrote a world-famous passage upon the great Lord Chatham in the *Edinburgh Review*:—

"Chatham sleeps near the northern door of the church, in a spot which has ever since been appropriated to states-

men, as the other end of the same transept has long been to poets. Mansfield rests there, and the second William Pitt, and Fox, and Grattan, and Canning, and Wilberforce. In no other cemetery do so many great citizens lie within so narrow a space. High over those venerable graves towers the stately monument of Chatham, and, from above, his effigy, graven by a cunning hand, seems still, with eagle face and outstretched arm, to bid England be of good cheer, and to hurl defiance at her foes.

"The generation which reared that memorial of him has disappeared. The time has come when the rash and indiscriminate judgments which his contemporaries passed on his character may be calmly revised by history. And history, while, for the warning of vehement, high, and daring natures, she notes his many errors, will yet deliberately pronounce that, among the eminent men whose bones lie near his, scarcely one has left a more stainless and none a more splendid name."

It is a great race, Antony, that can produce a man of such a character as Chatham, and also writers who can dedicate to him such superb tributes as these.

Macaulay's prose has been much criticised as being too near to easy journalism to be classed among the great classic passages of English; but this much must be recognised to his great credit—he never wrote an obscure sentence or an ambiguous phrase, and his works may be searched in vain for a foreign idiom or even a foreign word. He possessed an infallible memory, absolute perspicuity, and a scholarly taste. He detested oppression wherever enforced, and never exercised his great powers in the defence of mean politics or unworthy practices.

Such a writer to-day would blow a wholesome wind across the tainted pools of political intrigue.

We can salute him, Antony, as a fine, manly, clean writer, who was an honour to letters.

Your loving old

G. P.

XV

My dear Antony,

Born in the same year as was Grattan, namely, in 1750, Lord Erskine adorned the profession of the Bar with an eloquence that never exhibited the slight tendency to be ponderous which sometimes was displayed by his contemporaries.

Grace and refinement shine out in every of his great speeches.

He was a young scion of the great house of Buchan, being the third son of the tenth Earl. After being in the Navy for four years he left it for the Army, and six years later he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, and took his degree; thence he came to the Bar in 1778, and at once displayed the most conspicuous ability as an advocate.

He appeared for Horne Tooke in a six-day trial for high treason, which ended in an acquittal.

In 1806 he became Lord Chancellor and a peer.

I quote an indignant warning to the aristocracy of England which flamed forth in one of his great speeches:—

> "Let the aristocracy of England, which trembles so much for itself, take heed to its own security; let the nobles of England, if they mean to preserve that pre-eminence which, in some shape or other, must exist in every social community, take care to support it by aiming at that which is creative, and alone creative, of real superiority. Instead of matching themselves to supply wealth, to be again idly squandered in debauching excesses, or to round the quarters of a family shield; instead of continuing their names and

honours in cold and alienated embraces, amidst the enervating rounds of shallow dissipation, let them live as their fathers of old lived before them; let them marry as affection and prudence lead the way, and, in the ardours of mutual love, and in the simplicities of rural life, let them lay the foundation of a vigorous race of men, firm in their bodies, and moral from early habits; and, instead of wasting their fortunes and their strength in the tasteless circles of debauchery, let them light up their magnificent and hospital halls to the gentry and peasantry of the country, extending the consolations of wealth and influence to the poor. Let them but do this,—and instead of those dangerous and distracted divisions between the different ranks of life, and those jealousies of the multitude so often blindly painted as big with destruction, we should see our country as one large and harmonious family, which can never be accomplished amidst vice and corruption, by wars and treaties, by informations, *ex officio* for libels, or by any of the tricks and artifices of the State."

Mr Erskine was entitled, as the son of the tenth Earl of Buchan, to speak such words of warning and exhortation to the aristocracy of England to which he belonged, and the lapse of a century and a quarter has not rendered the exhortation vain, though it may be hoped that the condemnatory clauses of the speech would not at the present time be so well justified as when they were delivered.

Great names carry great obligations, and, for the most part, those who bear them to-day recognise those great obligations and endeavour without ostentation to fulfil them.

The silly fribbles who posture before the photographic cameras for penny newspapers do not represent the real aristocracy of England.

We must not, Antony, mistake a cockatoo for an eagle.

Your loving old

G. P.

XVI

My dear Antony,

I shall not expect you in your reading often to penetrate into the innumerable dusty octavos that contain sermons. The stoutest heart may fail, without blame, before the flat-footed pedestrianism of these platitudinous volumes. But there does occasionally arise above the dull horizon a star whose brilliance is the more conspicuous for the surrounding gloom.

In 1796, Coleridge, in a letter[1] to a Mr Flower, who was a publisher at Cambridge, wrote :—

> " I hope Robert Hall is well. Why is he idle ? I mean towards the public. We want such men to rescue this *enlightened age* from general irreligion."

I suppose Robert Hall is a name known to but few in these days, but at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries his fame was great and deserved.

As a divine, dowered with the gift of inspired eloquence, Coleridge estimated his powers as second only to those of Jeremy Taylor. When Napoleon was at the supreme height of his conquests, and England alone of European countries still stood erect, uninvaded and undismayed, a company of soldiers attended Robert Hall's place of worship on the eve of their departure to Spain. The occasion was memorable and moving, and the preacher's splendid periods deserve to be preserved from oblivion :—

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[1] Now in my library.—S. C.

"By a series of criminal enterprises, by the successes of guilty ambition, the liberties of Europe have been gradually extinguished; the subjugation of Holland, Switzerland, and the free towns of Germany, has completed that catastrophe; and we are the only people in the Eastern Hemisphere who are in possession of equal laws and a free constitution. Freedom, driven from every spot on the Continent, has sought an asylum in a country which she always chose for her favourite abode; but she is pursued even here, and threatened with destruction. The inundations of lawless power, after covering the whole earth, threaten to follow us here, and we are most exactly, most critically placed in the only aperture where it can be successfully repelled, in the Thermopylæ of the universe.

"As far as the interests of freedom are concerned, the most important by far of sublunary interests, you, my countrymen, stand in the capacity of the federal representatives of the human race; for with you it is to determine (under God) in what condition the latest posterity shall be born; their fortunes are entrusted to your care, and on your conduct at this moment depends the colour and complexion of their destiny. If liberty, after being extinguished on the Continent, is suffered to expire here, whence is it ever to emerge in the midst of that thick night that will invest it?

"It remains with you, then, to decide whether that freedom, at whose voice the kingdoms of Europe awoke from the sleep of ages to run a career of virtuous emulation in everything great and good; the freedom which dispelled the mists of superstition and invited the nations to behold their God; whose magic touch kindled the rays of genius, the enthusiasm of poetry, and the flame of eloquence; the freedom which poured into our lap opulence and arts, and embellished life with innumerable institutions and improvements till it became a theatre of wonders; it is for you to decide whether this freedom shall yet survive, or be covered with a funeral pall, and wrapt in eternal gloom.

"It is not necessary to await your determination. In the solicitude you feel to approve yourselves worthy of such a trust, every thought of what is afflicting in warfare,

every apprehension of danger, must vanish, and you are impatient to mingle in the battle of the civilised world.

"Go then, ye defenders of your country, accompanied with every auspicious omen; advance with alacrity into the field, where God Himself musters the hosts of war. Religion is too much interested in your success not to lend you her aid; she will shed over this enterprise her selectest influences. While you are engaged in the field many will repair to the closet, many to the sanctuary; the faithful of every name will employ that prayer which has power with God; the feeble hands which are unequal to any other weapon will grasp the sword of the Spirit; from myriads of humble, contrite hearts, the voice of intercession, supplication, and weeping, will mingle in its ascent to heaven with the shouts of battle and the shock of arms.

"While you have everything to fear from the success of the enemy, you have every means of preventing that success, so that it is next to impossible for victory not to crown your exertions. The extent of your resources, under God, is equal to the justice of your cause.

"But should Providence determine otherwise; should you fall in this struggle, should the nation fall, you will have the satisfaction (the purest allotted to man) of having performed your part; your names will be enrolled with the most illustrious dead, while posterity to the end of time, as often as they revolve the events of this period (and they will incessantly revolve them) will turn to you a reverential eye while they mourn over the freedom which is entombed in your sepulchre.

"I cannot but imagine the virtuous heroes, legislators, and patriots, of every age and country, are bending from their elevated seats to witness this contest, as if they were incapable, till it be brought to a favourable issue, of enjoying their eternal repose.

"Enjoy that repose, illustrious immortals! Your mantle fell when you ascended, and thousands inflamed with your spirit, and impatient to tread in your steps, are ready 'to swear by Him that sitteth upon the throne and liveth for ever and ever,' they will protect freedom in her last asylums, and never desert that cause which you sustained by your labours and cemented with your blood.

"And Thou, Sole Ruler among the children of men, to whom the shields of the earth belong, 'gird on Thy sword, Thou most Mighty'; go forth with our hosts in the day of battle! Impart, in addition to their hereditary valour, that confidence of success which springs from Thy Presence!

"Pour into their hearts the spirit of departed heroes! Inspire them with Thine own, and, while led by Thine Hand and fighting under Thy banners, open Thou their eyes to behold in every valley and in every plain, what the prophet beheld by the same illuminations—chariots of fire, and horses of fire!

"Then shall the strong man be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark; and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them."

We, who have just emerged, shattered indeed and reeling, from another and yet more awful combat for freedom, can the better extend our sympathy to those forefathers of ours situated in like case, and can imagine with what beating hearts they must have listened to so magnificent a call to arms as this; commingling prayer, exhortation, and benediction.

May such a call never come to our beloved country again! But if it does, Antony, I know where you will be found without need of exhortations from me.

Your loving old

G. P.

XVII

My dear Antony,

Grattan, of whom I have already written, had in the first Lord Plunket a successor and a compatriot very little his inferior in the gift of oratory.

He was born in 1764, and was therefore some fourteen years younger than Grattan, whom he survived by thirty-four years.

Like Grattan, he displayed a burning patriotism and, like him, fiercely opposed the Act of Union.

Few orators have displayed greater powers of clear reason and convincing logic than Plunket. It may be admitted that he seldom rose to great heights of eloquence, but tradition credits his delivery with a quality of dignity amounting almost to majesty. The gift of oratory consists in how things are said as much as in what things are said, and the voice, gesture, and manner of Plunket were commanding and magnificent.

When Attorney-General in Ireland, in 1823, in a speech prosecuting the leaders of the riot known as "the Bottle Riot," Plunket uttered the following fine tribute to the character of William the Third :—

> "Perhaps, my lords, there is not to be found in the annals of history a character more truly great than that of William the Third. Perhaps no person has ever appeared on the theatre of the world who has conferred more essential or more lasting benefits on mankind ; on these countries, certainly none. When I look at the abstract merits of his character, I contemplate him with admiration and reverence.

Lord of a petty principality—destitute of all resources but those with which nature had endowed him—regarded with jealousy and envy by those whose battles he fought; thwarted in all his counsels; embarrassed in all his movements; deserted in his most critical enterprises—he continued to mould all those discordant materials, to govern all these warring interests, and merely by the force of his genius, the ascendancy of his integrity, and the immovable firmness and constancy of his nature, to combine them into an indissoluble alliance against the schemes of despotism and universal domination of the most powerful monarch in Europe, seconded by the ablest generals, at the head of the bravest and best disciplined armies in the world, and wielding, without check or control, the unlimited resources of his empire. He was not a consummate general; military men will point out his errors; in that respect Fortune did not favour him, save by throwing the lustre of adversity over all his virtues. He sustained defeat after defeat, but always rose *adversa rerum immersabilis unda.* Looking merely at his shining qualities and achievements, I admire him as I do a Scipio, a Regulus, a Fabius; a model of tranquil courage, undeviating probity, and armed with a resoluteness and constancy in the cause of truth and freedom, which rendered him superior to the accidents that control the fate of ordinary men.

"But this is not all—I feel that to him, under God, I am, at this moment, indebted for the enjoyment of the rights which I possess as a subject of these free countries; to him I owe the blessings of civil and religious liberty, and I venerate his memory with a fervour of devotion suited to his illustrious qualities and to his godlike acts."

This is not so magnificent a panegyric as that of Grattan in his written tribute to Chatham, but, enhanced by the gesture and voice of the great orator, it was reputed to have left a deep impression upon all who heard it.

But few speeches, however eloquent, survive, while the printed work of the writer may long endure; but to the orator is given what the writer never experiences —the fierce enjoyment, amounting almost to rapture,

of holding an audience entranced under the spell of the spoken cadences; and English, Antony, has a splendour all its own when uttered by a master of its august music.

Your loving old

G. P.

XVIII

My dear Antony,

To-day I will write about Robert Southey, and, as he and Coleridge married sisters, you may claim a distant relationship with him. His personal character was beautiful and unselfish, and his dwelling at Keswick was the home that for years sheltered Coleridge's children.

With hardly an exception the poets of England have had an easy and royal mastery of prose; and in the case of Robert Southey there are some, and they are not the worst critics, who anticipate that his prose will long outlast his poetry in the Temple of Fame.

We may suppose that to a man whose whole private life was stainlessly dedicated to a noble rectitude of conduct, and whose every act was sternly subjected to the judgment of an unbending conscience, some circumstances of the private life of Nelson must have been distasteful and open to censure; but no such reservations dimmed the splendour of Southey's tribute to the public hero who gave his life in the act of establishing, beyond reach of dispute or cavil, the throne of England as Queen of the Sea.

> "The death of Nelson was felt in England as something more than a public calamity; men started at the intelligence, and turned pale, as if they had heard of the loss of a dear friend. An object of our admiration and affection, of our pride and of our hopes, was suddenly taken from us, and it seemed as if we had never, till then, known how deeply we loved and reverenced him.
>
> "What the country had lost in its great naval hero—

the greatest of our own, and of all former times, was scarcely taken into the account of grief. So perfectly, indeed, had he performed his part, that the maritime war, after the battle of Trafalgar, was considered at an end; the fleets of the enemy were not merely defeated, but destroyed; new navies must be built, and a new race of seamen reared for them, before the possibility of their invading our shores could again be contemplated.

"It was not, therefore, from any selfish reflection upon the magnitude of our loss that we mourned for him; the general sorrow was of a higher character. The people of England grieved that funeral ceremonies, public monuments and posthumous rewards, were all which they could now bestow upon him whom the king, the legislature, and the nation, would alike have delighted to honour; whom every tongue would have blessed; whose presence in every village through which he might have passed would have wakened the church bells, have given schoolboys a holiday, have drawn children from their sports to gaze upon him, and 'old men from the chimney corner' to look upon Nelson ere they died.

"The victory of Trafalgar was celebrated, indeed, with the usual forms of rejoicing, but they were without joy; for such already was the glory of the British Navy through Nelson's surpassing genius, that it scarcely seemed to receive any addition from the most signal victory that ever was achieved upon the seas; and the destruction of this mighty fleet, by which all the maritime schemes of France were totally frustrated, hardly appeared to add to our security or strength, for while Nelson was living to watch the combined squadrons of the enemy, we felt ourselves as secure as now, when they were no longer in existence.

"There was reason to suppose from the appearances upon opening the body, that in the course of nature he might have attained, like his father, to a good old age. Yet he cannot be said to have fallen prematurely whose work was done; nor ought he to be lamented, who died so full of honours, and at the height of human fame. The most triumphant death is that of a martyr; the most awful, that of the martyred patriot; the most splendid,

that of the hero in the hour of victory ; and if the chariot and the horses of fire had been vouchsafed for Nelson's translation, he could scarcely have departed in a brighter blaze of glory.

" He has left us, not indeed his mantle of inspiration, but a name and an example which are at this hour inspiring hundreds of the youth of England ; a name which is our pride, and an example which will continue to be our shield and our strength."

Nelson left England the Queen of the Sea, and the great war with Germany has failed to displace her from that splendid throne. For the plain fact of history remains that, after the battle of Jutland, the German High Seas Fleet never ventured out of port again till the end of the war ; and when it did emerge from its ignominious security, it sailed to captivity at Scapa Flow, there ultimately to repose on the bottom of the sea.

Your loving old

G. P.

XIX

My dear Antony,

There are four very celebrated lines written by Walter Savage Landor which you may have heard quoted; they were written towards the close of his life, and are certainly distinguished and memorable :—

> "I strove with none, for none was worth my strife;
> Nature I loved, and next to Nature Art;
> I warmed both hands before the fire of life:
> It sinks, and I am ready to depart."

It does not detract from the merit of the lines that as a fact Landor was of a fiery disposition, and strove a great deal with many adversaries, often of his own creation, throughout his long life[1]; and although he was of a fierce and combative nature he displayed in his writings a classical restraint and tender beauty hardly achieved by his contemporaries.

In the form of an imaginary conversation between Æsop and Rhodope, Landor makes the latter describe how her father, in the famine, unbeknown to her, starved that she might have plenty, and, when all was gone, took her to the market-place to sell her that she might live. There is an exquisite delicacy in this dialogue that places it among the wonders of literature :—

> "*Rhodope.* Never shall I forget the morning when my father, sitting in the coolest part of the house, exchanged his last measure of grain for a chlamys of scarlet cloth, fringed with silver. He watched the merchant out of the door, and then looked wistfully into the cornchest. I,

[1] Born 1775, died 1864.

who thought there was something worth seeing, looked in also, and finding it empty, expressed my disappointment, not thinking, however, about the corn. A faint and transient smile came over his countenance at the sight of mine. He unfolded the chlamys, stretched it out with both hands before me, and then cast it over my shoulders. I looked down on the glittering fringe and screamed with joy. He then went out; and I know not what flowers he gathered, but he gathered many; and some he placed in my bosom, and some in my hair. But I told him with captious pride, first that I could arrange them better, and again that I would have only the white. However, when he had selected all the white and I had placed a few of them according to my fancy, I told him (rising in my slipper) he might crown me with the remainder.

"The splendour of my apparel gave me a sensation of authority. Soon as the flowers had taken their station on my head, I expressed a dignified satisfaction at the taste displayed by my father, just as if I could have seen how they appeared! But he knew that there was at least as much pleasure as pride in it, and perhaps we divided the latter (alas! not both) pretty equally.

"He now took me into the market-place, where a concourse of people were waiting for the purchase of slaves. Merchants came and looked at me; some commending, others disparaging; but all agreeing that I was slender and delicate, that I could not live long, and that I should give much trouble. Many would have bought the chlamys, but there was something less saleable in the child and flowers.

"*Æsop.* Had thy features been coarse and thy voice rustic, they would all have patted thy cheeks and found no fault in thee.

"*Rhodope.* As it was, every one had bought exactly such another in time past, and been a loser by it. At these speeches I perceived the flowers tremble slightly on my bosom, from my father's agitation. Although he scoffed at them, knowing my healthiness, he was troubled internally, and said many short prayers, not very unlike imprecations, turning his head aside. Proud was I, prouder than ever, when at last several talents were offered for me,

and by the very man who in the beginning had undervalued me most, and prophesied the worst of me. My father scowled at him and refused the money. I thought he was playing a game, and began to wonder what it could be, since I had never seen it played before. Then I fancied it might be some celebration because plenty had returned to the city, insomuch that my father had bartered the last of the corn he hoarded.

"I grew more and more delighted at the sport. But soon there advanced an elderly man, who said gravely, 'Thou hast stolen this child; her vesture alone is worth a hundred drachmas. Carry her home again to her parents, and do it directly, or Nemesis and the Eumenides will overtake thee.' Knowing the estimation in which my father had always been holden by his fellow-citizens, I laughed again and pinched his ear. He, although naturally choleric, burst forth into no resentment at these reproaches, but said calmly, 'I think I know thee by name, O guest! Surely thou art Xanthus, the Samian. Deliver this child from famine.'

"Again I laughed aloud and heartily, and thinking it was now part of the game, I held out both my arms, and protruded my whole body toward the stranger. He would not receive me from my father's neck, but he asked me with benignity and solicitude if I was hungry; at which I laughed again, and more than ever; for it was early in the morning, soon after the first meal, and my father had nourished me most carefully and plentifully in all the days of the famine. But Xanthus, waiting for no answer, took out of a sack, which one of his slaves carried at his side, a cake of wheaten bread and a piece of honeycomb, and gave them to me. I held the honeycomb to my father's mouth, thinking it the most of a dainty. He dashed it to the ground, but seizing the bread he began to devour it ferociously. This also I thought was in play, and I clapped my hands at his distortions. But Xanthus looked at him like one afraid, and smote the cake from him, crying aloud, 'Name the price.' My father now placed me in his arms, naming a price much below what the other had offered, saying, 'The gods are ever with thee, O Xanthus! therefore to thee do I consign my child.'

"But while Xanthus was counting out the silver my father seized the cake again, which the slave had taken up and was about to replace in the wallet. His hunger was exasperated by the taste, and the delay. Suddenly there arose much tumult. Turning round in the old woman's bosom who had received me from Xanthus, I saw my beloved father struggling on the ground, livid and speechless. The more violent my cries, the more rapidly they hurried me away; and many were soon between us.

"Little was I suspicious that he had suffered the pangs of famine long before: alas! and he had suffered them for me. Do I weep while I am telling you they ended? I could not have closed his eyes; I was too young; but I might have received his last breath, the only comfort of an orphan's bosom. Do you now think him blameable, O Æsop?"

"*Æsop.* It was sublime humanity; it was forbearance and self-denial which even the immortal gods have never shown us."

The *Dream of Petrarca* is, I think, more famous but not more beautiful than this narrative of Rhodope; it lacks the deep human tragedy and infinite charity of the winsome child, and the self-contained father silently perishing of hunger for her; but if the *Æsop and Rhodope* had never been written, the *Dream of Petrarca* would secure its author a place among the immortals:—

". . . Wearied with the length of my walk over the mountains, and finding a soft molehill, covered with grey moss, by the wayside, I laid my head upon it and slept. I cannot tell how long it was before a species of dream or vision came over me.

"Two beautiful youths appeared beside me; each was winged; but the wings were hanging down and seemed ill adapted to flight. One of them, whose voice was the softest I ever heard, looking at me frequently, said to the other, 'He is under my guardianship for the present; do not awaken him with that feather.' Methought, on

hearing the whisper, I saw something like the feather on an arrow; and then the arrow itself; the whole of it, even to the point, although he carried it in such a manner that it was difficult at first to discover more than a palm's length of it; the rest of the shaft (and the whole of the barb) was behind his ankles.

"'This feather never awakens anyone,' replied he, rather petulantly, 'but it brings more of confident security, and more of cherished dreams, than you, without me, are capable of imparting.'

"'Be it so!' answered the gentler; 'none is less inclined to quarrel or dispute than I am. Many whom you have wounded grievously call upon me for succour; but so little am I disposed to thwart you, it is seldom I venture to do more for them than to whisper a few words of comfort in passing. How many reproaches on these occasions have been cast upon me for indifference and infidelity! Nearly as many, and nearly in the same terms as upon you.'

"'Odd enough that we, O Sleep! should be thought so alike!' said Love contemptuously. 'Yonder is he who bears a nearer resemblance to you; the dullest have observed it.' I fancied I turned my eyes to where he was pointing, and saw at a distance the figure he designated. Meanwhile the contention went on uninterruptedly. Sleep was slow in asserting his power or his benefits. Love recapitulated them; but only that he might assert his own above them.

"Suddenly he called upon me to decide, and to choose my patron. Under the influence, first of the one, then of the other, I sprang from repose to rapture, I alighted from rapture on repose, and knew not which was sweetest. Love was very angry with me, and declared he would cross me through the whole of my existence. Whatever I might on other occasions have thought of his veracity, I now felt too surely that he would keep his word.

"At last, before the close of the altercation, the third Genius had advanced, and stood near us. I cannot tell you how I knew him, but I knew him to be the Genius of Death. Breathless as I was at beholding him, I soon became familiar with his features. First they seemed

only calm; presently they grew contemplative; and lastly beautiful; those of the Graces themselves are less regular, less harmonious, less composed.

"Love glanced at him unsteadily, with a countenance in which there was somewhat of anxiety, somewhat of disdain; and cried 'Go away! go away! nothing that thou touchest, lives!' 'Say rather, child!' replied the advancing form, and advancing grew loftier and statelier, 'say rather that nothing of beautiful or of glorious lives its own true life until my wing hath passed over it.'

"Love pouted, and rumpled and bent down with his forefinger the stiff short feathers on his arrow-head, but replied not. Although he frowned worse than ever, and at me, I dreaded him less and less, and scarcely looked towards him. The milder and calmer Genius, the third, in proportion as I took courage to contemplate him, regarded me with more and more complacency. He held neither flower nor arrow as the others did, but throwing back the clusters of dark curls that overshadowed his countenance, he presented to me his hand, openly and benignly. I shrank on looking at him so near, and yet I sighed to love him. He smiled, not without an expression of pity, at perceiving my diffidence, my timidity; for I remembered how soft was the hand of Sleep, how warm and entrancing was Love's.

"By degrees I became ashamed of my ingratitude, and turning my face away, I held out my arms, and I felt my neck within his; the coolness of freshest morning breathed around; the heavens seemed to open above me, while the beautiful cheek of my deliverer rested on my head. I would now have looked for those others, but knowing my intention by my gesture, he said consolatorily, 'Sleep is on his way to the Earth, where many are calling him; but it is not to these he hastens, for every call only makes him fly further off. Sedately and gravely as he looks, he is nearly as capricious and volatile as the more arrogant and ferocious one.'

"'And Love!' said I, 'whither is he departed? If not too late, I would propitiate and appease him.'

"'He who cannot follow me; he who cannot overtake and pass me,' said the Genius, 'is unworthy of the name,

the most glorious in earth or heaven. Look up! Love is yonder, and ready to receive thee.'

"I looked: the earth was under me: I saw only the clear blue sky, and something brighter above it."

There is something most rare and refined and precious in this vision, told as it is with a sweet serenity. But it does not touch the heart like the *Æsop and Rhodope*.

Your loving old

G. P.

XX

My dear Antony,

I now come to speak of one whose fame was familiar to me as a boy—the great Lord Brougham,—for he lived till 1868. I remember that he was vehemently praised and blamed as a politician, but with such matters others have dealt; in this letter, Antony, we will concern ourselves with the glory of English prose as it poured from Lord Brougham in two of his greatest speeches.

He was an orator whose voice was uplifted throughout a long and strenuous life in condemnation of all the brutalities and oppressions of his time, and to whose eloquence the triumphant cause of freedom stands for ever in deep obligation.

His great speech on Law Reform in the House of Commons, in 1828, took six hours to deliver, and the concluding passage, which mounted to a plane of lofty declamation, displayed no sign of exhaustion, and was listened to with strained attention by an absorbed and crowded audience :—

"The course is clear before us; the race is glorious to run. You have the power of sending your name down through all times, illustrated by deeds of higher fame, and more useful import, than ever were done within these walls.

"You saw the greatest warrior of the age—conqueror of Italy—humbler of Germany—terror of the North—saw him account all his matchless victories poor, compared with the triumph you are now in a condition to win—saw him contemn the fickleness of fortune, while, in despite of

her, he could pronounce his memorable boast, 'I shall go down to posterity with the Code in my hand!'

"You have vanquished him in the field; strive now to rival him in the sacred arts of peace! Outstrip him as a lawgiver, whom in arms you overcame! The lustre of the Regency will be eclipsed by the more solid and enduring splendour of the Reign. The praise which false courtiers feigned for our Edwards and Harrys, the Justinians of their day, will be the just tribute of the wise and the good to that monarch under whose sway so mighty an undertaking shall be accomplished. Of a truth, the holders of sceptres are most chiefly to be envied for that they bestow the power of thus conquering, and ruling thus.

"It was the boast of Augustus—it formed part of the glare in which the perfidies of his earlier years were lost,—that he found Rome of brick, and left it of marble; a praise not unworthy a great prince, and to which the present reign also has its claims. But how much nobler will be the sovereign's boast when he shall have it to say, that he found law dear, and left it cheap; found it a sealed book—left it a living letter; found it the patrimony of the rich—left it the inheritance of the poor; found it the two-edged sword of craft and oppression—left it the staff of honesty and the shield of innocence!

"To me, much reflecting on these things, it has always seemed a worthier honour to be the instrument of making you bestir yourselves in this high matter, than to enjoy all that office can bestow—office, of which the patronage would be an irksome encumbrance, the emoluments superfluous to one content with the rest of his industrious fellow-citizens that his own hands minister to his wants; and as for the power supposed to follow it—I have lived near half a century, and I have learned that power and place may be severed.

"But one power I do prize; that of being the advocate of my countrymen here, and their fellow-labourers elsewhere, in those things which concern the best interests of mankind. That power, I know full well, no government can give—no change take away!"

His speech on negro slavery made a deep impression upon the country, and rose towards its termination,

gradually, but with ever-ascending periods, to a close of absolute majesty :—

"I regard the freedom of the negro as accomplished and sure. Why? Because it is his right—because he has shown himself fit for it; because a pretext, or a shadow of a pretext, can no longer be devised for withholding that right from its possessor. I know that all men at this day take a part in the question, and they will no longer bear to be imposed upon, now they are well informed. My reliance is firm and unflinching upon the great change which I have witnessed—the education of the people, unfettered by party or by sect—witnessed from the beginning of its progress, I may say from the hour of its birth! Yes! It was not for a humble man like me to assist at royal births with the illustrious Prince who condescended to grace the pageant of this opening session, or the great captain and statesman in whose presence I am now proud to speak. But with that illustrious Prince, and with the father of the Queen, I assisted at that other birth, more conspicuous still. With them, and with the head of the House of Russell, incomparably more illustrious in my eyes, I watched over its cradle—I marked its growth—I rejoiced in its strength—I witnessed its maturity; I have been spared to see it ascend the very height of supreme power; directing the councils of state; accelerating every great improvement; uniting itself with every good work; propping all useful institutions; extirpating abuses in all our institutions; passing the bounds of our European dominion, and in the New World, as in the Old, proclaiming that freedom is the birthright of man—that distinction of colour gives no title to oppression—that the chains now loosened must be struck off, and even the marks they have left effaced—proclaiming this by the same eternal law of our nature which makes nations the masters of their own destiny, and which in Europe has caused every tyrant's throne to quake!

"But they need feel no alarm at the progress of light who defend a limited monarchy and support popular institutions—who place their chiefest pride not in ruling over slaves, be they white or be they black, not in protecting the oppressor, but in wearing a constitutional crown, in

holding the sword of justice with the hand of mercy, in being the first citizen of a country whose air is too pure for slavery to breathe, and on whose shores, if the captive's foot but touch, his fetters of themselves fall off. To the resistless progress of this great principle I look with a confidence which nothing can shake; it makes all improvement certain; it makes all change safe which it produces; for none can be brought about unless it has been prepared in a cautious and salutary spirit.

"So now the fulness of time is come for at length discharging our duty to the African captive. I have demonstrated to you that everything is ordered—every previous step taken—all safe, by experience shown to be safe, for the long-desired consummation. The time has come, the trial has been made, the hour is striking; you have no longer a pretext for hesitation, or faltering, or delay. The slave has shown, by four years' blameless behaviour, and devotion to the pursuits of peaceful industry, that he is as fit for his freedom as any English peasant, ay, or any lord whom I now address.

"I demand his rights; I demand his liberty without stint. In the name of justice and of law—in the name of reason—in the name of God, who has given you no right to work injustice; I demand that your brother be no longer trampled upon as your slave! I make my appeal to the Commons, who represent the free people of England; and I require at their hands the performance of that condition for which they paid so enormous a price—that condition which all their constituents are in breathless anxiety to see fulfilled! I appeal to this House. Hereditary judges of the first tribunal in the world—to you I appeal for justice. Patrons of all the arts that humanise mankind—under your protection I place humanity herself! To the merciful Sovereign of a free people I call aloud for mercy to the hundreds of thousands for whom half a million of her Christian sisters have cried aloud—I ask that their cry may not have risen in vain. But first I turn my eye to the throne of all justice, and devoutly humbling myself before Him who is of purer eyes than to behold such vast iniquities, I implore that the curse hovering over the head of the unjust and the oppressor be

averted from us—that your hearts may be turned to mercy—and that over all the earth His will may at length be done!"

This is nobly to use noble gifts; it is difficult to think ill of a man who can carry oratory for a glorious object to such heights of splendour. It may seem a duty to some to darken his character with detraction, but his inspiring words remain supreme and unsullied and will still live when such faults as may be truly laid to his charge are long forgotten. To fight for a great cause, Antony, is rightly to use great powers, and this is what Lord Brougham did with all his might.

Your loving old

G. P.

XXI

My dear Antony,

In the great emprise of war it must often happen that the most awful scenes of manifested human power, and the most godlike deeds of human glory, are lost to the contemporary world, and utterly unknown to succeeding generations, because they were witnessed by no man with the gift of expression who could record for after time, in adequate language, the majestic spectacle.

In the great war against Germany no great writer has yet appeared who was personally in touch as a living witness of the countless deeds of glorious valour and acts of heroic endurance that were everywhere displayed upon that immense far-stretched front.

But in the wars of former times, a whole battle could be witnessed from its beginning to its end by a single commander, and no scenes in human life could be more terrible and soul-stirring than the awful ebb and flow of a great combat in which the victory of armies and the fate of nations hung in the balance.

The battle of Albuera in the Peninsular War might easily at this date have lŏng been forgotten had not the pen of Sir William Napier been as puissant as his sword. The battle had raged for hours, and the British were well-nigh overwhelmed ; the Colonel, twenty officers, and over four hundred men out of five hundred and seventy had fallen in the 57th alone ; not a third were left standing in the other regiments that had been closely engaged throughout the day. Then Cole was ordered up with his fourth division as a last hope,

and this is how Sir William Napier records their advance :—

" Such a gallant line, issuing from the midst of the smoke and rapidly separating itself from the confused and broken multitude, startled the enemy's masses, then augmenting and pressing onwards as to an assured victory ; they wavered, hesitated, and vomiting forth a storm of fire hastily endeavoured to enlarge their front, while a fearful discharge of grape from all their artillery whistled through the British ranks . . . the English battalions, struck by the iron tempest, reeled and staggered like sinking ships ; but suddenly and sternly recovering, they closed on their terrible enemies, and then was seen with what a strength and majesty the British soldier fights.

" In vain did Soult with voice and gesture animate his Frenchmen ; in vain did the hardiest veterans, breaking from the crowded columns, sacrifice their lives to gain time for the mass to open out on such a fair field ; in vain did the mass itself bear up, and, fiercely striving, fire indiscriminately upon friends and foes, while the horsemen hovering on the flank threatened to charge the advancing line.

" Nothing could stop that astonishing infantry.

" No sudden burst of undisciplined valour, no nervous enthusiasm weakened the stability of their order ; their flashing eyes were bent on the dark columns in their front ; their measured tread shook the ground ; their dreadful volleys swept away the head of every formation ; their deafening shouts overpowered the dissonant cries that broke from all parts of the tumultuous crowd as slowly, and with a horrid carnage, it was pushed by the incessant vigour of the attack to the farthest edge of the height. There the French reserve, mixing with the struggling multitude, endeavoured to restore the fight, but only augmented the irremediable disorder, and the mighty mass, giving way like a loosened cliff, went headlong down the steep ; the rain flowed after in streams discoloured with blood, and eighteen hundred unwounded men, the remnant of six thousand unconquerable British soldiers, stood triumphant on the fatal hill !

. . . . . .

"The laurel is nobly won when the exhausted victor reels as he places it on his bleeding front.

"All that night the rain poured down, and the river and the hills and the woods resounded with the dismal clamour and groans of dying men."

Sir William Napier seems intimately to have known the transience of the gratitude of nations to those who fight their battles for them. At the end of his noble history of the Peninsular War he lets the curtain fall upon the scene with solemn brevity in a single sentence, thus :—

"The British infantry embarked at Bordeaux, some for America, some for England: the cavalry, marching through France, took shipping at Boulogne. Thus the war terminated, and with it all remembrance of the Veterans' services.

"Yet those Veterans had won nineteen pitched battles, and innumerable combats; had made or sustained ten sieges and taken four great fortresses; had twice expelled the French from Portugal, once from Spain; had penetrated France, and killed, wounded, or captured two hundred thousand enemies—leaving of their own number, forty thousand dead, whose bones whiten the plains and mountains of the Peninsula."

The base malignity of our latest adversaries has debased modern warfare, as waged by them, from its ancient dignity and honour; and they have conducted it so as to make it difficult to believe that from the Kaiser down to the subaltern on land and the petty officer at sea that nation can produce a single gentleman.

Your loving old

G. P.

XXII

My dear Antony,

This letter, like the last one, is concerned with war. War brings to every man not incapacitated by age or physical defects the call of his country to fight, and if need be to die, for it. It also exposes to view the few pusillanimous young men who are satisfied to enjoy protection from the horrors of invasion and the priceless boon of personal freedom, secured to them by the self-sacrifice and valour of others, while they themselves remain snugly at home and talk of their consciences.

Patriotism such as that which in 1914 led the flower of our race to flock in countless thousands to the standards and be enrolled for battle in defence of

"This precious stone set in the silver sea,"
"This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,"

being without doubt or cavil one of the noblest emotions of the human heart, has often been the begetter of inspired prose.

Our own great war has not yet produced many fine utterances, and I go back to-day to a contemporary of Sir William Napier for one of the noblest outbursts of eloquence expressive of a burning patriotism that has ever been poured forth.

Someone in the days when Wellington was alive had alluded in the House of Lords to the Irish as "aliens," and Richard Sheil, rising in the House of Commons, lifted up his voice for his country in an impassioned flight of generous eloquence.

Sir Henry Hardinge, who had been at the battle of

Waterloo, happened to be seated opposite to Sheil in the House, and to him Sheil appealed with the deepest emotion to support him in his vindication of his country's valour. None will in these days deny that our fellow-citizens of Ireland who went to the war displayed a courage as firm and invincible as our own :—

"The Duke of Wellington is not, I am inclined to believe, a man of excitable temperament. His mind is of a cast too martial to be easily moved ; but, notwithstanding his habitual inflexibility, I cannot help thinking, that when he heard his countrymen (for we are his countrymen) designated by a phrase so offensive he ought to have recalled the many fields of fight in which we have been contributors to his renown. Yes, the battles, sieges, fortunes, that he has passed ought to have brought back upon him, that from the earliest achievement in which he displayed that military genius which has placed him foremost in the annals of modern warfare, down to that last and surpassing combat which has made his name imperishable, the Irish soldiers, with whom our armies are filled, were the inseparable auxiliaries to his glory.

"Whose were the athletic arms that drove their bayonets at Vimiera through those phalanxes that never reeled in the shock of war before ? What desperate valour climbed the steeps and filled the moats at Badajos ! All ! all his victories should have rushed and crowded back upon his memory—Vimiera, Badajos, Salamanca, Albuera, Toulouse, and last of all the greatest ! (and here Shiel pointed to Sir Henry Hardinge across the House). Tell me, for you were there. I appeal to the gallant soldier before me, from whose opinions I differ, but who bears, I know, a generous heart in an intrepid breast ; tell me, for you must needs remember, on that day when the destinies of mankind were trembling in the balance, while death fell in showers upon them, when the artillery of France, levelled with a precision of the most deadly science, played upon them, when her legions, incited by the voice and inspired by the example of their mighty leader, rushed again and again to the onset—tell me if for one instant, when to hesitate for one instant was to be lost, the ' aliens ' blenched !

"And when at length the moment for the last and decisive movement had arrived, and the valour which had so long been wisely checked was at length let loose, tell me if Ireland with less heroic valour than the natives of your own glorious isle, precipitated herself upon the foe?

"The blood of England, of Scotland, and of Ireland, flowed in the same stream, on the same field. When the still morning dawned, their dead lay cold and stark together; in the same deep earth their bodies were deposited; the green corn of spring is now breaking from their commingled dust; the dew falls from Heaven upon their union in the grave.

"Partners in every peril—in the glory shall we not be permitted to participate, and shall we be told as a requital that we are aliens, and estranged from the noble country for whose salvation our life-blood was poured out?"

A hundred years of strife, misunderstanding, anger, estrangement, outrages, bloodshed, and murder separate us from this appealing cry wrung from the beating heart of this inspired Irishman. Is the great tragedy of England and Ireland that has sullied their annals for seven hundred years never to be brought to an end? Is there never to be for us a Lethe through which we may pass to the farther shore of forgetfulness and forgiveness of the past and reconciliation in the future?

That you may live to see it, Antony, is my hope and prayer.

Your loving old

G. P.

XXIII

My dear Antony,

I gave you in a former letter Burke's famous passage on the fate of Marie Antoinette—in some ways the most splendid of his utterances,—and I now am going to quote to you a very great passage from Thomas Carlyle on the same tragic subject.

Courageous was it of Carlyle, who must certainly have been familiar with Burke's noble ejaculation, to challenge it with emulation ; but in the result we must admit that he amply justifies his temerity.

The tragic figure of the queen drawn to execution through the roaring mob inspired Carlyle with what is surely his most overwhelming product.

The august shadow of the Bible is dimly apprehended as the words ascend upwards and upwards with simple sublimity to the awful close.

Nothing he wrote in all his multitudinous volumes surpasses this astonishing outburst :—

" Beautiful Highborn that wert so foully hurled low !

" For, if thy being came to thee out of old Hapsburg Dynasties, came it not also out of Heaven ? *Sunt lachrymæ rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.* Oh ! is there a man's heart that thinks without pity of those long months and years of slow-wasting ignominy ;—of thy birth soft-cradled, the winds of Heaven not to visit thy face too roughly, thy foot to light on softness, thy eye on splendour ; and then of thy death, or hundred deaths, to which the guillotine and Fouquier Tinville's judgment was but the merciful end ?

" Look *there,* O man born of woman ! The bloom of that fair face is wasted, the hair is grey with care ; the

brightness of those eyes is quenched, their lids hang drooping, the face is stony pale as of one living in death.

" Mean weeds which her own hand has mended attire the Queen of the World. The death-hurdle, where thou sittest pale, motionless, which only curses environ, has to stop—a people drunk with vengeance will drink it again in full draught, looking at thee there. Far as the eye reaches, a multitudinous sea of maniac heads, the air deaf with their triumph-yell !

" The living-dead must shudder with yet one more pang ; her startled blood yet again suffuses with the hue of agony that pale face, which she hides with her hands.

" There is, then, *no* heart to say, ' God pity thee ' ?

" O think not of these : think of Him Whom thou worshippest, the Crucified—Who also treading the winepress alone, fronted sorrow still deeper, and triumphed over it, and made it holy, and built of it a Sanctuary of Sorrow for thee and all the wretched !

" Thy path of thorns is nigh ended. One long last look at the Tuileries, where thy step was once so light—where thy children shall not dwell.

" The head is on the block ; the axe rushes—dumb lies the world ; that wild-yelling world, and all its madness, is behind thee."

There is a passage in Carlyle's tempestuous narrative of the taking of the Bastille which has always seemed to me to give it the last consummate touch of greatness. Suddenly he pauses in the turmoil and dust and wrath and madness of that tremendous conflict, and his poetic vision gazes away over peaceful France, and he exclaims :—

" O evening sun of July, how, at this hour thy beams fall slant on reapers amid peaceful woody fields ; on old women spinning in cottages ; on ships far out on the silent main ; on balls at the Orangerie of Versailles, where high rouged Dames of the palace are even now dancing with double-jacketed Hussar-officers :—and also on this roaring Hell-porch of a Hôtel de Ville."

And a few sentences further on a heart of stone

must be moved by what the archives of that grim prison-house revealed :—

> " Old secrets come to view ; and long-buried despair finds voice. Read this portion of an old letter.
>
> " ' If for my consolation Monseigneur would grant me, for the sake of God and the Most Blessed Trinity, that I could have news of my dear wife ; were it only her name on a card, to show that she is alive ! It were the greatest consolation I could receive ; and I should for ever bless the greatness of Monseigneur.'
>
> " Poor prisoner, who namest thyself Queret-Demery, and hast no other history,—she is dead, that dear wife of thine, and thou art dead ! 'Tis fifty years since thy breaking heart put this question ; to be heard now first, and long heard, in the hearts of men."

In the reign of Louis XV. alone, there were no less than fifteen thousand *lettres de cachet* issued, by which anyone could be suddenly arrested, and, without trial, and, heedless of protest, imprisoned perhaps for life in the Bastille.

In the excesses of the Reign of Terror three or four thousand persons perished. Their deaths were spectacular, and have covered with execrations their dreadful executioners.

But it is right that we should remember, Antony, the life-long agony and the unutterable despair of the victims of that remorselessly cruel system which the Revolution overthrew.

The chapter on the " Everlasting Yea," in *Sartor Resartus*, seems to me to come nearer to the above excerpts than anything else in Carlyle, though at a perceptible distance :—

> " O thou that pinest in the imprisonment of the Actual, and criest bitterly to the gods for a kingdom wherein to rule and create, know this of a truth : the thing thou seekest is already with thee, ' here or nowhere,' couldst thou only see !

" But it is with man's Soul as it was with Nature: the beginning of Creation is—Light. Till the eye have vision the whole members are in bonds. Divine moment, when over the tempest-tossed Soul, as once over the wild-weltering Chaos, it is spoken: ' Let there be Light! ' Even to the greatest that has felt such moment is it not miraculous and God-announcing; even as, under simpler figures, to the simplest and least. The mad primeval Discord is hushed; the rudely-jumbled conflicting elements bind themselves into separate Firmaments: deep, silent rock-foundations are built beneath, and the skyey vault, with its everlasting Luminaries, above; instead of a dark, wasteful Chaos, we have a blooming, fertile, heaven-encompassed World.

" I, too, could now say to myself: ' Be no longer a Chaos, but a World, or even Worldkin. Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee: out with it then. Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called to-day; for the night cometh wherein no man can work. ' "

There is another passage in *Sartor Resartus* which I have always held in veneration, though the field labourer is not now so " hardly-entreated " as when Carlyle wrote of him :—

" Two men I honour, and no third. First the toilworn Craftsman that with earth-made implement laboriously conquers the earth, and makes her man's.

" Venerable to me is the hard hand; crooked, coarse; wherein notwithstanding lies a cunning virtue indefeasibly royal, as of the sceptre of this planet. Venerable too is the rugged face, all weather-tanned, besoiled, with its rude intelligence; for it is the face of a man living manlike. Oh, but the more venerable for thy rudeness, and even because we must pity as well as love thee! Hardly-entreated brother! For us was thy back so bent, for us were thy straight limbs and fingers so deformed; thou wert our conscript, on whom the lot fell, and fighting our battles wert so marred. For in thee too lay a god-created

form, but it was not to be unfolded ; encrusted must it stand with the thick adhesions and defacements of labour ; and thy body, like thy soul, was not to know freedom. Yet toil on, toil on ; *thou* art in thy duty, be out of it who may : thou toilest for the altogether indispensable, for daily bread.

"A second man I honour, and still more highly : him who is seen toiling for the spiritually indispensable ; not daily bread, but the bread of life. Is not he too in his duty ; endeavouring towards inward harmony ; revealing this, by act or by word, through all his outward endeavours, be they high or low ? Highest of all, when his outward and his inward endeavour are one : when we can name him artist ; not earthly craftsman only, but inspired thinker, who with heaven-made implement conquers heaven for us ! If the poor and humble toil that we have food, must not the high and glorious toil for him in return, that he have light, have guidance, freedom, immortality ? These two, in all their degrees, I honour ; all else is chaff and dust, which let the wind blow whither it listeth.

" Unspeakably touching is it, however, when I find both dignities united ; and he that must toil outwardly for the lowest of man's wants, is also toiling inwardly for the highest. Sublimer in this world know I nothing than a peasant saint, could such now anywhere be met with. Such a one will take thee back to Nazareth itself ; thou wilt see the splendour of heaven spring forth from the humblest depths of earth, like a light shining in great darkness."

Sartor Resartus has long taken its place among the greatest prose works of the nineteenth century, and it is a strange commentary on this mandate to us all to " produce, produce ! " to find that for eleven years Carlyle could find no publisher who would give it in book form to the world !

It is a solemn reflection to think that there may be many books of eloquence and splendour that have never seen the light of publicity. Publishers concern themselves less with what is finely written than with what will best sell ; and in their defence it may be

acceded that some of the masterpieces of literature have at their first appearance before the world fallen dead from the press.

The first edition of FitzGerald's *Omar Khayyám*, issued at one shilling, was totally unrecognised, and copies of it might have been bought for twopence in the trays and boxes outside old bookshops!

But if once a work is published, time will with almost irresistible force place it ultimately in the station it deserves in the literature of the world.

Instant acceptance not seldom preludes final rejection. In the middle of the last century Martin Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy* garnished every drawing-room table; and now, where is it?

Your loving old

G. P.

P.S.—Do not look for the passage on Marie Antoinette in the *French Revolution*, for you will not find it there, but in the "Essay of the Diamond Necklace."

XXIV

My dear Antony,

You and I once had a cousin, Henry Nelson Coleridge, who, had he lived, would very certainly have left a brilliant addition to the lustre of the name he bore. He was born in 1798, and only lived forty-five years, dying when his powers were leading him to high fortune in that legal profession which so many of the family have pursued.

He was a scholar of Eton; a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge; he won the Greek and Latin Odes in 1820, and the Greek Ode again in 1821. To him, therefore, the classic spirit was inborn, and a training that omitted the study of Latin and Greek the very negation of education. He would have had something very trenchant to say of what is now known as "the modern side." He wrote a very rich and splendid prose, and it is no fond family partiality that leads me to quote to you his eloquent and precious defence of the classical languages:—

"I am not one whose lot it has been to grow old in literary retirement, devoted to classical studies with an exclusiveness which might lead to an overweening estimate of these two noble languages. Few, I will not say evil, were the days allowed to me for such pursuits; and I was constrained, still young and an unripe scholar, to forego them for the duties of an active and laborious profession. They are now amusements only, however delightful and improving. For I am far from assuming to understand all their riches, all their beauty, or all their power; yet I can profoundly feel their immeasurable superiority in many important respects to all we call modern; and I

would fain think that there are many even among my younger readers who can now, or will hereafter, sympathise with the expression of my ardent admiration.

" Greek—the shrine of the genius of the old world ; as universal as our race, as individual as ourselves ; of infinite flexibility, or indefatigable strength, with the complication and the distinctness of Nature herself ; to which nothing was vulgar, from which nothing was excluded ; speaking to the ear like Italian, speaking to the mind like English ; with words like pictures, with words like the gossamer films of the summer ; at once the variety and picturesqueness of Homer ; the gloom and the intensity of Æschylus ; not compressed to the closest by Thucydides, nor fathomed to the bottom by Plato ; not sounding with all its thunders, nor lit up with all its ardours even under the Promethean touch of Demosthenes !

" And Latin—the voice of empire and of war, of law and of the state, inferior to its half-parent and rival in the embodying of passion and in the distinguishing of thought, but equal to it in sustaining the measured march of history ; and superior to it in the indignant declamation of moral satire ; stamped with the mark of an imperial and despotising republic ; rigid in its construction, parsimonious in its synonyms ; reluctantly yielding to the flowery yoke of Horace, although opening glimpses of Greek-like splendour in the occasional inspirations of Lucretius ; proved indeed, to the uttermost, by Cicero, and by him found wanting ; yet majestic in its bareness, impressive in its conciseness ; the true language of history, instinct with the spirit of nations and not with the passions of individuals ; breathing the maxims of the world, and not the tenets of the schools ; one and uniform in its air and spirit, whether touched by the stern and haughty Sallust, by the open and discursive Livy, by the reserved and thoughtful Tacitus.

" These inestimable advantages, which no modern skill can wholly counterpoise, are known and felt by the scholar alone. He has not failed, in the sweet and silent studies of his youth, to drink deep at those sacred fountains of all that is just and beautiful in human language.

" The thoughts and the words of the master-spirits of Greece and of Rome, are inseparably blended in his

memory; a sense of their marvellous harmonies, their exquisite fitness, their consummate polish, has sunk for ever in his heart, and thence throws out light and fragrancy upon the gloom and the annoyance of his maturer years. No avocations of professional labour will make him abandon their wholesome study; in the midst of a thousand cares he will find an hour to recur to his boyish lessons—to reperuse them in the pleasurable consciousness of old associations, and in the clearness of manly judgment, and to apply them to himself and to the world with superior profit.

"The more extended his sphere of learning in the literature of modern Europe, the more deeply, though the more wisely, will he reverence that of classical antiquity; and in declining age, when the appetite for magazines and reviews, and the ten-times repeated trash of the day, has failed, he will retire, as it were, within a circle of school-fellow friends, and end his secular studies as he began them, with his Homer, his Horace, and his Shakespeare."

Ah, what an echo, Antony, every word of this beautiful passage finds in my own heart, only saddened with the poignant regret that the necessary business and occupation of the passing years have dulled for me such unpolished facility, as I may once have possessed, for perusing my Homer and my Horace!

It is, indeed, rare in these days to find gentlemen as familiar as were their forebears with Latin and Greek. You, Antony, will probably find yourself as you grow up in like case with myself, but there will remain for your unending instruction and delight all the glories of English literature, to give you a taste for which these few letters of mine are written, plucking only a single flower here and there from the most wonderful garden in the world.

Your loving old

G. P.

XXV

My dear Antony,

Cardinal Newman, of whom I shall write to-day, was the first of the great writers born in the nineteenth century, and he lived from 1801 to 1890. Besides being a master of English prose he was no mean poet; but above all else he was a man of immense personal power, which was strangely associated with a manifest saintliness which compelled diffidence from those admitted to his intimacy.

I have described him as I knew him in my *Memories*[1]; and now will quote to you his utterance on music and its effect upon the heart of man, which has always seemed to me too precious to leave buried in a sermon :—

> "Let us take an instance, of an outward and earthly form, or economy, under which great wonders unknown seem to be typified; I mean musical sounds as they are exhibited most perfectly in instrumental harmony.
>
> 'There are seven notes in the scale; make them fourteen; yet what a slender outfit for so vast an enterprise! What Science brings so much out of so little? out of what poor elements does some great master in it create his new world!
>
> "Shall we say that all this exuberant inventiveness is a mere ingenuity or trick of art, like some game or fashion of the day, without reality, without meaning? We may do so; and then, perhaps, we shall also account theology to be a matter of words; yet, as there is a divinity in the theology of the Church, which those who feel cannot communicate, so is there also in the wonderful creation of sublimity and beauty of which I am speaking. To many men the very

[1] Pp. 52–57.

names which the Science employs are utterly incomprehensible. To speak of an idea or a subject seems to be fanciful or trifling, to speak of the views which it opens upon us to be childish extravagance; yet is it possible that that inexhaustible evolution and disposition of notes, so rich yet so simple, so intricate yet so regulated, so various yet so majestic, should be a mere sound, which is gone and perishes?

"Can it be that those mysterious stirrings of heart, and keen emotions, and strange yearnings after we know not what, and awful impressions from we know not whence, should be wrought in us by what is unsubstantial, and comes and goes, and begins and ends in itself? It is not so; it cannot be. No; they have escaped from some higher sphere, they are the outpourings of eternal harmony in the medium of created sound; they are echoes from our home; they are the voice of angels or the magnificat of Saints, or the living laws of Divine Governance, or the Divinic attributes; something are they besides themselves, which we cannot compass, which we cannot utter,—though mortal man, and he perhaps not otherwise distinguished above his fellows, has the gift of eliciting them."

Of quite another order is the Cardinal's description of a gentleman. Here there is no flight of poetical imagination, but a manifestation of felicitous intuition and penetrating insight as rare as it is convincing, and the generous wide vision of a man of the world, undimmed by the faintest trace of prejudice :—

"Hence it is that it is almost a definition of a gentleman to say he is one who never inflicts pain. This description is both refined and, as far as it goes, accurate. He is mainly occupied in merely removing the obstacles which hinder the free and unembarrassed action of those about him; and he concurs with their movements rather than takes the initiative himself. His benefits may be considered as parallel to what are called comforts or conveniences in arrangements of a personal nature: like an easy chair or a good fire, which do their part in dispelling cold and fatigue, though nature provides both means of rest and animal heat without them.

"The true gentleman in like manner carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast; all clashing of opinion, or collision of feeling, all restraint, or suspicion, or gloom, or resentment; his great concern being to make everyone at their ease and at home. He has his eyes on all his company; he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, and merciful towards the absurd; he can recollect to whom he is speaking; he guards against unseasonable allusions, or topics which may irritate; he is seldom prominent in conversation and never wearisome.

"He makes light of favours while he does them, and seems to be receiving when he is conferring. He never speaks of himself except when compelled, never defends himself by a mere retort; he has no ears for slander or gossip, is scrupulous in imputing motives to those who interfere with him, and interprets everything for the best. He is never mean or little in his disputes, never takes unfair advantage, never mistakes personalities or sharp sayings for arguments, or insinuates evil which he dare not say out. From a long-sighted prudence he observes the maxim of the ancient sage, that we should ever conduct ourselves towards our enemy as if he were one day to be our friend. He has too much sense to be affronted at insults, he is too well employed to remember injuries, and too indolent to bear malice.

"He is patient, forbearing, and resigned, on philosophical principles; he submits to pain because it is inevitable, to bereavement because it is irreparable, and to death because it is his destiny. If he engages in controversy of any kind his disciplined intellect preserves him from the blundering discourtesy of better, perhaps, but less educated minds, who, like blunt weapons, tear and hack instead of cutting clean, who mistake the point in argument, waste their strength in trifles, misconceive their adversary, and leave the question more involved than they find it. He may be right or wrong in his opinion, but he is too clear-headed to be unjust, he is as simple as he is forcible, and as brief as he is decisive.

"Nowhere shall we find greater candour, consideration, indulgence; he throws himself into the minds of his

opponents, he accounts for their mistakes. He knows the weakness of human reason as well as its strength, its province, and its limits. If he be an unbeliever he will be too profound and large-minded to ridicule religion or to act against it; he is too wise to be a dogmatist or fanatic in his infidelity. He respects piety and devotion; he even supports institutions as venerable, beautiful, or useful, to which he does not assent; he honours the ministers of religion, and it contents him to decline its mysteries without assailing or denouncing them. He is a friend of religious toleration, and that, not only because his philosophy has taught him to look on all forms of faith with an impartial eye, but also from the gentleness and effeminacy of feeling which is the attendant on civilisation.

"Not that he may not hold a religion too, in his own way, even when he is not a Christian. In that case his religion is one of imagination and sentiment; it is the embodiment of those ideas of the sublime, majestic, and beautiful, without which there can be no large philosophy. Sometimes he acknowledges the Being of God, sometimes he invests an unknown principle or quality with the attributes of perfection. And this deduction of his reason, or creation of his fancy, he makes the occasion of such excellent thoughts, and the starting-point of so varied and systematic a teaching, that he even seems like a disciple of Christianity itself. From the very accuracy and steadiness of his logical powers, he is able to see what sentiments are consistent in those who hold any religious doctrine at all, and he appears to others to feel and to hold a whole circle of theological truths, which exist in his mind no otherwise than as a number of deductions.

"Such are the lineaments of the ethical character which the cultivated intellect will form apart from religious principle."

Surely this is a wonderful utterance from a Cardinal of the Church of Rome, full of urbanity and the wisdom of the world.

Your loving old

G. P.

XXVI

My dear Antony,

I have in a former letter quoted a short but noble passage from Lord Macaulay on the great Lord Chatham.

But I feel that the writer who was perhaps the greatest essayist that England has ever produced must not in these letters be fobbed off with so slight a notice and quotation.

What has always seemed to me the supremest passage that flowed from his wonderful pen is to be found in his paper on Warren Hastings which appeared originally in the *Edinburgh Review*.

His description in that essay of the opening of the great Impeachment, has given all succeeding generations a vision of one of the most majestic scenes in the whole history of man.

> "There have been spectacles more dazzling to the eye, more gorgeous with jewellery and cloth of gold, more attractive to grown-up children, than that which was then exhibited at Westminster; but, perhaps, there never was a spectacle so well calculated to strike a highly cultivated, a reflecting, an imaginative mind. All the various kinds of interest which belong to the near and to the distant, to the present and to the past, were collected on one spot and in one hour. All the talents and all the accomplishments which are developed by liberty and civilisation were now displayed, with every advantage that could be derived both from co-operation and from contrast. Every step in the proceedings carried the mind either backward, through many troubled centuries, to the days when the foundations of our constitution were laid; or far away, over

boundless seas and deserts, to dusky nations living under strange stars, worshipping strange gods, and writing strange characters from right to left. The High Court of Parliament was to sit, according to forms handed down from the days of the Plantagenets, on an Englishman accused of exercising tyranny over the lord of the holy city of Benares, and over the ladies of the princely house of Oude.

"The place was worthy of such a trial. It was the great hall of William Rufus, the hall which had resounded with acclamations at the inauguration of thirty kings, the hall which had witnessed the just sentence of Bacon and the just absolution of Somers, the hall where the eloquence of Strafford had for a moment awed and melted a victorious party inflamed with just resentment, the hall where Charles had confronted the High Court of Justice with the placid courage which has half redeemed his fame. Neither military nor civil pomp was wanting. The avenues were lined with grenadiers. The streets were kept clear by cavalry. The peers, robed in gold and ermine, were marshalled by the heralds under Garter King-at-Arms. The judges in their vestments of state attended to give advice on points of law. Near a hundred and seventy lords, three-fourths of the Upper House as the Upper House then was, walked in solemn order from their usual place of assembling to the tribunal. The junior Baron present led the way, George Eliott, Lord Heathfield, recently ennobled for his memorable defence of Gibraltar against the fleets and armies of France and Spain. The long procession was closed by the Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal of the realm, by the great dignitaries, and by the brothers and sons of the King. Last of all came the Prince of Wales, conspicuous by his fine person and noble bearing. The grey old walls were hung with scarlet. The long galleries were crowded by an audience such as has rarely excited the fears or the emulation of an orator. There were gathered together, from all parts of a great, free, enlightened, and prosperous empire, grace and female loveliness, wit and learning, the representatives of every science and of every art. There were seated round the Queen the fair-haired young daughters of the House of

Brunswick. There the Ambassadors of great Kings and Commonwealths gazed with admiration on a spectacle which no other country in the world could present. There Siddons, in the prime of her majestic beauty, looked with emotion on a scene surpassing all the imitations of the stage. There the historian of the Roman Empire thought of the days when Cicero pleaded the cause of Sicily against Verres, and when, before a senate which still retained some show of freedom, Tacitus thundered against the oppressor of Africa. There were seen, side by side, the greatest painter and the greatest scholar of the age. The spectacle had allured Reynolds from that easel which has preserved to us the thoughtful foreheads of so many writers and statesmen, and the sweet smiles of so many noble matrons. It had induced Parr to suspend his labours in that dark and profound mine from which he had extracted a vast treasure of erudition, a treasure too often buried in the earth, too often paraded with injudicious and inelegant ostentation, but still precious, massive, and splendid. There appeared the voluptuous charms of her to whom the heir of the throne had in secret plighted his faith. There too was she, the beautiful mother of a beautiful race, the Saint Cecilia, whose delicate features, lighted up by love and music, art has rescued from the common decay. There were the members of that brilliant society which quoted, criticised, and exchanged repartees, under the rich peacock hangings of Mrs Montague. And there the ladies whose lips, more persuasive than those of Fox himself, had carried the Westminster election against palace and treasury, shone round Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire.

" The Serjeants made proclamation. Hastings advanced to the bar, and bent his knee. The culprit was indeed not unworthy of that great presence. He had ruled an extensive and populous country, had made laws and treaties, had sent forth armies, had set up and pulled down princes. And in his high place he had so borne himself, that all had feared him, that most had loved him, and that hatred itself could deny him no title to glory, except virtue. He looked like a great man, and not like a bad man. A person small and emaciated, yet deriving dignity from a carriage which, while it indicated deference to the court, indicated

also habitual self-possession and self-respect, a high and intellectual forehead, a brow pensive, but not gloomy, a mouth of inflexible decision, a face pale and worn, but serene, on which was written, as legibly as under the picture in the council-chamber at Calcutta, *Mens æqua in arduis*; such was the aspect with which the great Proconsul presented himself to his judges."

Such a scene can only find its appropriate enactment at the centre of a great empire and amid a people with an august history behind them, conscious of present magnificence and confident of future glory.

We are now far into the second century since that memorable spectacle filled to the walls the great Hall of Westminster.

What was an oligarchy permeated by a fine spirit of liberty and adorned by the sacred principle of personal freedom, has been superseded by a democracy under which personal freedom suffers frequent curtailments, and liberty is severely abridged by the mandates of trade unions, the prohibitions of urban potentates, and the usurpations of medicine men.

But I am one, Antony, who look forward with steadfast hope and belief to a reaction from our present vulgarity, and to a reascension of England to a greater dignity, honour, and nobleness both in its public and private life than is observable to-day.

Your loving old

G. P.

XXVII

My dear Antony,

I have not in my letters to you travelled beyond our own islands in search of great English prose, but I propose now to make one divergence from this rule and quote a very great and deservedly far-famed speech, uttered on a memorable occasion, of Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States.

At the present time, I think, the name of Lincoln lies closer to the hearts of the American people than that of any other, not even excepting Washington and Hamilton. The latter, though they established American independence, remained in a personal sense English gentlemen till their death. Lincoln was born in the backwoods in rude poverty, received no education but what he acquired by his own unaided efforts, and lived and died a man of the people, the ideal type of native-born American.

He rose from the lowest to the highest position in the State, borne upwards by the simple nobility of his character, by the stainless purity of his actions, and the splendid motive of all his endeavours. His speeches and writings derive their power and distinction from no tricks of oratory, felicity of diction, or nimbleness of mind. They are the vocal results of the beatings of his great heart.

He led his people to war in the manner of a prophet of Israel ; with an awful austerity, majestic, invincible, and with hand uplifted in sure appeal to the God of battles. On the field of Gettysburg, where was waged the most tremendous of all combats of the war, he came to dedicate a cemetery to the innumerable dead, and these were his few and noble words :—

"Fourscore-and-seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

"Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

"But in a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us; that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Few are the opportunities in the history of the world when the time, the place, the occasion, and the words spoken, have combined so poignantly to move the hearts of men.

One can imagine the vast concourse standing awe-struck and uncovered before the solemn splendour of this noble dedication, every phrase of which will remain for generations a treasured and sacred memory in countless thousands of homes of the great continent in the West.

Your loving old

G. P.

XXVIII

My dear Antony,

The nineteenth century witnessed the rise of an entirely new style of English prose.

The ancient and universal restraints were swept away, the decorous stateliness of all the buried centuries was abandoned, and there arose a band of writers, to whom De Quincey and Ruskin were the leaders, who withdrew all veils from their emotions, threw away all the shackles of reserve, and poured their sobs and ecstasies upon us, in soaring periods of impassioned prose, glittering with decorative alliterations, and adorned with euphonious harmonies of vowel sounds.

This flamboyant style seems to have synchronised with the general decline of reserve and ceremony in English life, and with the rise of the modern familiar intimacy that leaves no privacy even to our thoughts.

This new habit of mind and speech has affected our literature deeply and diversely. In the hands of the really great masters such as Carlyle, Froude, and Ruskin, the intimate revelations of the throbbings of their hearts, and the direct and untrammelled appeal of their inmost souls crying in the market-place, take forcible possession of our affections, and bring them into closer touch with each one of us than was ever possible with the older restrained writers.

But with lesser men the modern decay of restraint and the licence of intimacy and of the emotions have led to widespread vulgarity, and a contemptible deluge of hyperbole, and superlative, and redundancy; and although the disappearance of reserve in modern

writing may tend to reduce all but the production of the great to a depressing state of vulgarity, it nevertheless, in the master's hand, has unlocked for us the doors of an Aladdin's palace! But even if the restraint of the ancient writers has disappeared from the prose of our own times, all great writing of necessity must now and always possess the quality of simplicity; and even Ruskin, who saw the world of nature about him with the eyes of a visionary, and wrote of what he saw as one so inspired as to be already half in Paradise, yet clothed his glorious outpourings in a raiment of perfect simplicity.

"This, I believe," he wrote, "is the ordinance of the firmament; and it seems to me that in the midst of the material nearness of these heavens God means us to acknowledge His own immediate Presence as visiting, judging, and blessing us. 'The earth shook, the heavens also dropped, at the presence of God.' 'He doth set His bow in the clouds,' and thus renews, in the sound of every drooping swathe of rain, His promise of everlasting love. 'In them hath He set a *tabernacle* for the sun,' whose burning ball, which, without the firmament, would be seen but as an intolerable and scorching circle in the blackness of vacuity, is by that firmament surrounded with gorgeous service, and tempered by mediatorial ministries; by the firmament of clouds the golden pavement is spread for his chariot wheels at morning; by the firmament of clouds the temple is built for his presence to fill with light at noon; by the firmament of clouds the purple veil is closed at evening round the sanctuary of his rest; by the mists of the firmament his implacable light is divided and its separated fierceness appeased into the soft blue that fills the depth of distance with its bloom, and the flush with which the mountains burn as they drink the overflowing of the dayspring. And in this tabernacling of the unendurable sun with men, through the shadows of the firmament, God would seem to set forth the stooping of His own majesty to men, upon the *throne* of the firmament.

"As the Creator of all the worlds, and the Inhabiter of eternity, we cannot behold Him; but as the Judge of the

earth and the Preserver of men, those heavens are indeed His dwelling-place. 'Swear not, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by earth, for it is His footstool.'

"And all those passings to and fro of fruitful showers and grateful shade, and all those visions of silver palaces built about the horizon, and voices of moaning winds and threatening thunders, and glories of coloured robe and cloven ray, are but to deepen in our hearts the acceptance and distinctness and dearness of the simple words, 'Our Father, Which art in heaven!'"

The description of the first approach to Venice before the days of railways will always be cherished by those who admire Ruskin's work as one of his most characteristic and memorable utterances:—

"In the olden days of travelling, now to return no more, in which distance could not be vanquished without toil, but in which that toil was rewarded partly by the power of that deliberate survey of the countries through which the journey lay, and partly by the happiness of the evening hours, when, from the top of the last hill he had surmounted, the traveller beheld the quiet village, where he was to rest, scattered among the meadows beside its valley stream; or, from the long-hoped-for turn in the dusty perspective of the causeway, see, for the first time, the towers of some famed city, faint in the rays of sunset—hours of peaceful and thoughtful pleasure, for which the rush of the arrival in the railway station is perhaps not always, or to all men, an equivalent—in those days, I say, when there was something more to be anticipated and remembered in the first aspect of each successive halting place than a new arrangement of glass roofing and iron girder—there were few moments of which the recollection was more fondly cherished by the traveller than that which, as I endeavoured to describe in the close of the last chapter, brought him within sight of Venice, as his gondola shot into the open lagoon from the canal of Mestre.

"Not but that the aspect of the city itself was generally the source of some slight disappointment, for, seen in this direction, its buildings are far less characteristic than those

of the other great towns of Italy ; but this inferiority was partly disguised by distance, and more than atoned for by the strange rising of its walls and towers out of the midst, as it seemed, of the deep sea ; for it was impossible that the mind or the eye could at once comprehend the shallowness of the vast sheet of water which stretched away in leagues of rippling lustre to the north and south, or trace the narrow line of islets bounding it to the east. The salt breeze, the white moaning sea-birds, the masses of black weed separating and disappearing gradually in knots of heaving shoal under the advance of the steady tide, all proclaimed it to be indeed the ocean on whose bosom the great city rested so calmly ; not such blue, soft, lake-like ocean as bathes the Neapolitan promontories, or sleeps beneath the marble rocks of Genoa, but a sea with the bleak power of northern waves, yet subdued into a strange spacious rest, and changed from its angry pallor into a field of burnished gold as the sun declined behind the belfry tower of the lonely island church, fitly named ' St George of the Sea-weed.'

" As the boat drew nearer to the city, the coast which the traveller had just left sank behind him into one long, low, sad-coloured line, tufted irregularly with brushwood and willows ; but, at what seemed its northern extremity, the hills of Argua rose in a dark cluster of purple pyramids, balanced on the bright mirage of the lagoon ; two or three smooth surges of inferior hill extended themselves about their roots, and beyond these, beginning with the craggy peaks above Vicenza, the chain of the Alps girded the whole horizon to the north—a wall of jagged blue, here and there showing through its clefts a wilderness of misty precipices, fading far back into the recesses of Cadore, and itself rising and breaking away eastward, where the sun struck opposite upon its snow into mighty fragments of peaked light, standing up behind the barred clouds of evening one after another, countless, the crown of the Adrian Sea, until the eye turned back from pursuing them, to rest upon the nearer burning of the campaniles of Murano, and on the great city, where it magnified itself along the waves, as the quick, silent pacing of the gondola drew nearer and nearer.

"And at last when its walls were reached, and the outmost of its untrodden streets was entered, not through towered gate or guarded rampart, but as a deep inlet between two rocks of coral in the Indian Sea; when first upon the traveller's sight opened the long ranges of columned palaces—each with its black boat moored at the portal, each with its image cast down beneath its feet upon that green pavement which every breeze broke into new fantasies of rich tessellation when first, at the extremity of the bright vista, the shadowy Rialto threw its colossal curve slowly forth from behind the palace of the Camerlemghi, that strange curve, so delicate, so adamantine, strong as a mountain cavern, graceful as a bow just bent; when first, before its moonlike circumference was all risen, the gondolier's cry, 'Ah! Stali!' struck sharp upon the ear, and the prow turned aside under the mighty cornices that half met over the narrow canal, where the plash of the water followed close and loud, ringing along the marble by the boat's side; and when at last the boat darted forth upon the breadth of silver sea, across which the front of the Ducal palace, flushed with its sanguine veins, looks to the snowy dome of Our Lady of Salvation, it was no marvel that the mind should be so deeply entranced by the visionary charm of a scene so beautiful and so strange as to forget the darker truths of its history and its being.

"Well might it seem that such a city had owed her existence rather to the rod of the enchanter, than the fear of the fugitive; that the waters which encircled her had been chosen for the mirror of her state, rather than the shelter of her nakedness; and that all which in Nature was wild or merciless—Time and Decay, as well as the waves and tempests—had been won to adorn her instead of to destroy, and might still spare, for ages to come, that beauty which seemed to have fixed for its throne the sands of the hour-glass as well as of the sea."

It is now many years since I first saw Venice rising from the sea on a September morning as I sailed towards it across the Adriatic from Trieste; and as we glided closer and closer its loveliness was slowly

and exquisitely unveiled under the slanting beams of the early sun.

In all my wanderings over two hemispheres I remember no vision so enchanting and unsurpassable! May you live to see it, Antony, before the vulgarities of modern life have totally defaced its beauty.

Your loving old

G. P.

XXIX

My dear Antony,

Born in Devon at the same time—within a year—as Ruskin, James Anthony Froude wrote prose that displays the same sanguine and poetical characteristics. His historical writings have, I believe, been somewhat discredited of late years owing to the permission he is alleged to have given himself to warp his account of events in order to buttress some prejudice or contention of his own.

But if we set him aside as an accurate authority, we can at once restore him to our regard as a lord of visionary language :—

> " Beautiful is old age, beautiful as the slow-dropping, mellow autumn of a rich, glorious summer. In the old man Nature has fulfilled her work ; she leads him with her blessings ; she fills him with the fruits of a well-spent life ; and, surrounded by his children and his children's children, she rocks him softly away to the grave, to which he is followed with blessings. God forbid we should not call it beautiful. It is beautiful, but not the most beautiful.
>
> " There is another life, hard, rough, and thorny, trodden with bleeding feet and aching brow ; the life of which the cross is the symbol ; a battle which no peace follows, this side of the grave ; which the grave gapes to finish before the victory is won ; and—strange that it should be so—this is the highest life of man.
>
> " Look back along the great names of history ; there is none whose life has been other than this. They to whom it has been given to do the really highest work in this earth, whoever they are, Jew or Gentile, Pagan or Christian,

warriors, legislators, philosophers, priests, poets, kings, slaves—one and all, their fate has been the same—the same bitter cup has been given them to drink."

Another passage of deep and melancholy beauty cannot be omitted from this volume. It records in language of haunting loveliness the passing away of feudalism and chivalry and of a thousand years of the pageantry of faith :—

"The great trading companies were not instituted for selfish purposes, but to ensure the consumer of manufactured articles that what he purchased was properly made and of a reasonable price. They determined prices, fixed wages, and arranged the rules of apprenticeship. But in time the companies lost their healthy vitality, and, with other relics of feudalism, were in the reign of Elizabeth hastening away. There were no longer tradesmen to be found in sufficient number who were possessed of the necessary probity ; and it is impossible not to connect such a phenomenon with the deep melancholy which, in those days, settled down on Elizabeth herself.

"For indeed a change was coming upon the world, the meaning and direction of which even is still hidden from us—a change from era to era. The paths trodden by the footsteps of ages were broken up ; old things were passing away, and the faith and life of ten centuries were dissolving like a dream. Chivalry was dying; the abbey and the castle were soon together to crumble into ruins ; and all the forms, desires, beliefs, convictions of the old world were passing away, never to return. A new continent had risen up beyond the western sea. The floor of heaven, inlaid with stars, had sunk back into an infinite abyss of immeasurable space ; and the firm earth itself, unfixed from its foundations, was seen to be but a small atom in the awful vastness of the Universe.

"In the fabric of habit which they had so laboriously built for themselves, mankind was to remain no longer. And now it is all gone—like an unsubstantial pageant, faded ; and between us and the old English there lies a gulf of mystery which the prose of the historian will never adequately bridge. They cannot come to us, and our

imagination can but feebly penetrate to them. Only among the aisles of the cathedrals, only as we gaze upon their silent figures sleeping on their tombs, some faint conceptions float before us of what these men were when they were alive; and perhaps in the sound of church bells, that peculiar creation of mediæval age, which falls upon the ear like the echo of a vanished world."

The sound of church bells, being entirely the creation of man, forms perhaps a more touching link with the past for us than the eternal sounds of nature. Yet the everlasting wash of the waves of the sea forms a bond between us and the unplumbed depths of time, as they

> "Begin and cease, and then again begin
> With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
> The eternal note of sadness in.
> Sophocles long ago
> Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought
> Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
> Of human misery."

So wrote Matthew Arnold. Then there is the sound of wind in the trees, and the voice of falling waters and rippling streams which must have fallen upon the ears of our remotest forerunners as they do upon our own. These eternal sounds about us take no note of our brief coming and going, and will be the same when you and I, Antony, and all the millions that come after us in the world have returned to dust.

Your loving old

G. P.

XXX

My dear Antony,

Though I do not myself rank Matthew Arnold among the great prose writers of England, yet, like all true poets—and he indeed was one of them,—he wrote excellent English prose.

It is true that he turned to poetry to express his finest emotions and thoughts, and he himself alludes to his prose writings thus: "I am a mere solitary wanderer in search of the light, and I talk an artless, unstudied, everyday familiar language. But, after all, this is the language of the mass of the world."

The chief note of all his teaching was urbanity. "The pursuit of perfection," he said, "is the pursuit of sweetness and light." "Culture hates hatred: culture has one great passion—the passion for sweetness and light."

This teaching, no doubt, leads to fields of pleasantness and charm, and not at all to the high places of self-sacrifice, or the austere peaks of martyrdom. Burning indignation against intolerable things, fierce denunciation of the cruelties and abominations of the world find no encouragement or sympathy from this serene, detached, and therefore somewhat ineffectual, teaching.

Sweetness and light would never have interfered with the slave trade, or fiercely fought beside Plimsoll for the load-line on the sides of ships.

We did not fight the Germans under the doctrine of sweetness and light.

It was a beautiful and edifying adornment for the drawing-room in times of Victorian self-satisfied peace,

but was a tinsel armour for the battle of life, and entirely futile as a sword for combating wrong.

I am not sure that Matthew Arnold would not have called those who wrathfully slash about them at abominable evils, Philistines.

After all, the great men of action and the great writers of the world have been capable of harbouring great enthusiasms and deep indignations in their hearts; and these emotions do not emerge from a "passion for sweetness and light."

A better doctrine, Antony, is, I think, to try to push things along cheerfully but strenuously in the right direction wherever and whenever you can.

As a writer I think Matthew Arnold's best passage is to be found in the Preface to his *Essays in Criticism*:—

> "Oxford. Beautiful city! So venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century, so serene!
>
> "There are our young barbarians, all at play!
>
> "And yet steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection,—to beauty, in a word, which is only truth seen from another side?—nearer perhaps than all the science of Tübingen. Adorable dreamer, whose heart has been so romantic! who hast given thyself so prodigally, given thyself to sides and heroes not mine, only never to the Philistines! home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties! . . . Apparitions of a day, what is our puny warfare against the Philistines, compared with the warfare which this Queen of Romance has been waging against them for centuries, and will wage after we are gone?"

As a man and a companion,[1] if you expected nothing

[1] See my *Memories*, pp. 46–52 and 55.

but delightful humour, brilliant discourse, and urbane outlook upon everything, few could rival his personal charm; but he would never really join you in a last ditch to defend the right, or actually charge with you against the wrong, although in his poem "The Last Word," while not participating himself in such strenuous doings, he seems to yield a reluctant admiration to him who does so charge, and who leaves his "body by the wall."

Much has happened since Matthew Arnold poured his scorn upon the unregenerate Philistines; but let us remember, Antony, that thousands and thousands of these contemned neglecters of sweetness and light stood unflinchingly and died upon the plains of France that our country and its freedom should survive.

Your loving old

G. P.

XXXI

My dear Antony,

Like the author of the *Peninsular War*, Sir William Butler was great both as a soldier and as a writer. His autobiography sparkles with humour, irony, and felicitous diction ; but it was in his *Life of Gordon of Khartoum* that he rose to his full stature as a contributor to the glory of English prose.

The spell of Gordon seems to have, as it were, transfigured all who approached him, and raised them out of themselves.

If Sir William Butler's final noble periods, which I here reproduce, do not deeply move him who reads them, then must that reader have a heart of stone :—

" Thus fell in dark hour of defeat a man as unselfish as Sidney, of courage dauntless as Wolfe, of honour stainless as Outram, of sympathy wide-reaching as Drummond, of honesty straightforward as Napier, of faith as steadfast as More. Doubtful indeed is it if anywhere in the past we shall find figure of knight or soldier to equal him, for sometimes it is the sword of death that gives to life its real knighthood, and too often the soldier's end is unworthy of his knightly life ; but with Gordon the harmony of life and death was complete, and the closing scenes seem to move to their fulfilment in solemn hush, as though an unseen power watched over the sequence of their sorrow.

" Not by the blind hazard of chance was this great tragedy consummated ; not by the discord of men or from the vague opposition of physical obstacle, by fault of route or length of delay, was help denied to him. The picture of a wonderful life had to be made perfect by heroic death. The moral had to be cut deep, and written

red, and hung high, so that its lesson could be seen by all men above strife and doubt and discord. Nay; the very setting of the final scenes has to be wrought out in such contrast of colour that the dullest eye shall be able to read the meaning of it all. For many a year back this soldier's life has been a protest against our most cherished teaching. Faith is weakness, we have said. He will show us it is strength. Reward is the right of service. Publicity is true fame. Let us go into action with a newspaper correspondent riding at our elbow, or sitting in the cabin of the ship, has been our practice. He has told us that the race should be for honour, not for 'honours,' that we should 'give away our medal,' and that courage and humility, mercy and strength, should march hand in hand together. For many a year we have had no room for him in our councils. Our armies knew him not; and it was only in semi-savage lands and in the service of remote empires he could find scope for his genius. Now our councils will be shamed in his service, and our armies will find no footing in our efforts to reach him. We have said that the Providence of God was only a calculation of chances; now for eleven months the amazing spectacle will be presented to the world of this solitary soldier standing at bay, within thirty days' travel of the centre of Empire, while the most powerful kingdom on the earth—the nation whose wealth is as the sands of the sea, whose boast is that the sun never sets upon its dominions—is unable to reach him—saving *he* does not want—but is unable to reach him even with one message of regret for past forgetfulness.

"No; there is something more in all this than mistake of Executive, or strife of party, or error of Cabinet, or fault of men can explain. The purpose of this life that has been, the lesson of this death that must be, is vaster and deeper than these things. The decrees of God are as fixed to-day as they were two thousand years ago, but they can be worked to their conclusion by the weakness of men as well as by the strength of angels.

"There is a grey frontlet of rock far away in Strathspey—once the Gordons' home—whose name in bygone times gave a rallying-call to a kindred clan. The scattered firs

and wind-swept heather on the lone summit of Craig Ellachie once whispered in Highland clansmen's ear the warcry, 'Stand fast! Craig Ellachie.' Many a year has gone by since kith of Charles Gordon last heard from Highland hilltop the signal of battle, but never in Celtic hero's long record of honour has such answer been sent back to Highland or to Lowland as when this great heart stopped its beating, and lay 'steadfast unto death' in the dawn at Khartoum. The winds that moan through the pine trees on Craig Ellachie have far-off meanings in their voices. Perhaps on that dark January night there came a breath from heaven to whisper to the old Highland rock, 'He stood fast! Craig Ellachie.'

"The dust of Gordon is not laid in English earth, nor does even the ocean, which has been named Britannia's realm, hold in 'its vast and wandering grave' the bones of her latest hero. Somewhere, far out in the immense desert whose sands so often gave him rest in life, or by the shores of that river which was the scene of so much of his labour, his ashes now add their wind-swept atoms to the mighty waste of the Soudan. But if England, still true to the long line of her martyrs to duty, keep his memory precious in her heart—making of him no false idol or brazen image of glory, but holding him as he was, the mirror and measure of true knighthood—then better than in effigy or epitaph will his life be written, and his nameless tomb become a citadel to his nation."

The statue of Gordon stands in noble reverie in Trafalgar Square, at the centre of the Empire for whose honour he died.

In St Paul's Cathedral he lies in effigy, and engraven upon the cenotaph can be seen the most splendid epitaph in the world.

His true greatness has been recorded by Sir William Butler in resounding and glorious English; and his last great act of stainless nobility has received a deathless tribute.

Your loving old

G. P.

XXXII

My dear Antony,

I have now come down, at last, to a great writer of English prose who is still with us.

Lord Morley at the present day is, I think, universally recognised as the greatest living man of letters in the British Empire ; he has crowned a long record of distinguished literary achievement with his *Life of Gladstone*, which has taken its place among the noblest biographies of the world, where it is destined to remain into the far future acclaimed as a masterpiece. In his description of the veteran statesman launching in the House of Commons his great project of Home Rule for Ireland, he has surprised himself out of his own reserve, and painted the scene for succeeding generations in colours that can never die :—

" No such scene has ever been beheld in the House of Commons. Members came down at break of day to secure their places ; before noon every seat was marked, and crowded benches were even arrayed on the floor of the House from the Mace to the Bar. Princes, ambassadors, great peers, high prelates, thronged the lobbies. The fame of the orator, the boldness of his exploit, curiosity as to the plan, poignant anxiety as to the party result, wonder whether a wizard had at last actually arisen with a spell for casting out the baleful spirits that had for so many ages made Ireland our torment and our dishonour—all these things brought together such an assemblage as no minister before had ever addressed within those world-renowned walls.

" The Parliament was new. Many of its members had fought a hard battle for their seats, and trusted they were

safe in the haven for half a dozen good years to come. Those who were moved by professional ambition, those whose object was social advancement, those who thought only of upright public service, the keen party of men, the men who aspire to office, the men with a past and the men who looked for a future, all alike found themselves adrift on dark and troubled waters. The secrets of the Bill had been well kept. To-day the disquieted host were first to learn what was the great project to which they would have to say that Aye or No on which for them and for the State so much would hang.

" Of the chief comrades or rivals of the minister's own generation, the strong administrators, the eager and accomplished debaters, the sagacious leaders, the only survivor now comparable to him, in eloquence or in influence, was Mr Bright. That illustrious man seldom came into the House in those distracted days ; and on this memorable occasion his stern and noble head was to be seen in dim obscurity.

" Various as were the emotions in other regions of the House, in one quarter rejoicing was unmixed. There, at least, was no doubt and no misgiving. There, pallid and tranquil, sat the Irish leader, whose hard insight, whose patience, energy, and spirit of command, had achieved this astounding result, and done that which he had vowed to his countrymen that he would assuredly be able to do. On the benches round him genial excitement rose almost to tumult. Well it might. For the first time since the Union the Irish case was at last to be pressed in all its force and strength, in every aspect of policy and of conscience by the most powerful Englishman then alive.

" More striking than the audience was the man ; more striking than the multitude of eager onlookers from the shore was the rescuer, with deliberate valour facing the floods ready to wash him down ; the veteran Ulysses, who, after more than half a century of combat, service, toil, thought it not too late to try a further ' work of noble note.' In the hands of such a master of the instrument the theme might easily have lent itself to one of those displays of exalted passion which the House had marvelled at in more than one of Mr Gladstone's speeches on the Turkish

question, or heard with religious reverence in his speech on the Affirmation Bill in 1883.

"What the occasion now required was that passion should burn low, and reasoned persuasion hold up the guiding lamp. An elaborate scheme was to be unfolded, an unfamiliar policy to be explained and vindicated. Of that best kind of eloquence which dispenses with declamation this was a fine and sustained example. There was a deep, rapid, steady, onflowing volume of arguments, exposition, exhortation. Every hard or bitter stroke was avoided. Now and again a fervid note thrilled the ear and lifted all hearts. But political oratory is action, not words—action, character, will, conviction, purpose, personality. As this eager muster of men underwent the enchantment of periods exquisite in their balance and modulation, the compulsion of his flashing glance and animated gesture, what stirred and commanded them was the recollection of national service, the thought of the speaker's mastering purpose, his unflagging resolution and strenuous will, his strength of thew and sinew well tried in long years of resounding war, his unquenched conviction that the just cause can never fail. Few are the heroic moments in our parliamentary politics, but this was one."

I will not trench upon politics in these letters; but I may hazard the belief that could those who rejected this noble effort, by the greatest statesman of the age, to assuage the everlasting Irish conflict, have looked into the future, few of them but would have supported it with relief and thanksgiving.

It is generally perhaps a blessing that the curtain that covers the future is impenetrable; but in this case, had it been lifted for us to gaze upon the appalling future, Gladstone's last effort for the peace of his country would surely not have been permitted to miscarry.

Your loving old

G. P.

XXXIII

My dear Antony,

Two other living writers I will commend to you.

The parents of Mr Belloc, with a happy prevision, anticipated by some decades the *entente cordiale*, and their brilliant son felicitously manifests in his own person many of the admirable qualities of both races. Fortunately for our literature, it is in the language of his mother that he has found his expression. Many are the beautiful utterances scattered through his charming works: two of the most picturesque deal with the greatness of France; the subject of one is the Ancient Monarchy, and of the other the Great Napoleon:—

"So perished the French Monarchy. Its dim origins stretched out and lost themselves in Rome; it had already learnt to speak and recognised its own nature when the vaults of the Thermæ echoed heavily to the slow footsteps of the Merovingian kings.

"Look up the vast valley of dead men crowned, and you may see the gigantic figure of Charlemagne, his brows level and his long white beard tangled like an undergrowth, having in his left hand the globe, and in his right the hilt of an unconquerable sword. There also are the short strong horsemen of the Robertian House, half hidden by their leather shields, and their sons before them growing in vestment and majesty and taking on the pomp of the Middle Ages; Louis VII., all covered with iron; Philip, the Conqueror; Louis IX., who alone is surrounded with light: they stand in a widening, interminable procession, this great crowd of kings; they loose their armour, they take their ermine on, they are accompanied by their captains and their marshals; at last, in their attitude and

in their magnificence they sum up in themselves the pride and the achievement of the French nation.

"But Time has dissipated what it could not tarnish, and the process of a thousand years has turned these mighty figures into unsubstantial things. You may see them in the grey end of darkness, like a pageant, all standing still. You look again, but with the growing light, and with the wind that rises before morning, they have disappeared."

"There is a legend among the peasants in Russia of a certain sombre, mounted figure, unreal, only an outline and a cloud, that passed away to Asia, to the east and to the north. They saw him move along their snows, through the long mysterious twilights of the northern autumn, in silence, with the head bent and the reins in the left hand loose, following some enduring purpose, reaching towards an ancient solitude and repose. They say it was Napoleon.

"After him there trailed for days the shadows of the soldiery, vague mists bearing faintly the forms of companies of men. It was as though the cannon smoke at Waterloo, borne on the light west wind of that June day, had received the spirits of twenty years of combat, and had drifted farther and farther during the fall of the year over the endless plains.

"But there was no voice and no order. The terrible tramp of the Guard, and the sound that Heine loved, the dance of the French drums, was extinguished; there was no echo of their songs, for the army was of ghosts and was defeated. They passed in the silence which we can never pierce, and somewhere remote from men they sleep in bivouac round the most splendid of human swords."

Time and circumstances have changed our ancient enemies into our honoured friends, and the race that fought against us at Waterloo has cemented its friendship towards us with its blood.

Your loving old

G. P.

XXXIV

My dear Antony,

I will now quote to you one other master of splendid English.

Not every temporal sovereign of these realms has deserved a throne among the kings of literature. James the First was a poet of some merit; Charles the First wrote and spoke with a fine distinction; Queen Victoria's letters to her subjects were models of dignified and kindly simplicity; but to King George the Fifth by the grace of God it has been reserved to give utterance to what I believe to be the most noble and uplifting address ever delivered by a king to his people.

From the day of his accession King George has been confronted with trials and troubles enough to daunt the stoutest heart, and none of us can plumb the depth of anguish that must have been his through the awful years of the Great War. He has been tried and proved in the fierce fires of adversity, and has emerged ennobled by pain, and dowered by sorrow with a gift of expression that has placed him among the masters of the glory of English prose.

On the 13th day of May 1922 he concluded a tour of the cemeteries in France at Terlinchthun, where there stands on the cliffs overlooking the Channel a monument to Napoleon and his Grand Army, and around it now lie the innumerable English dead.

Earlier in his pilgrimage Marshal Foch and Lord Haig had in his presence clasped hands, and the King with a fine gesture had placed his own right hand upon

their clasped ones and said, "Amis toujours!" We are told that, "going up to the Cross of Sacrifice, the King looked out over the closely marshalled graves to the sea, and back towards the woods and fields of the Canche Valley where Montreuil stands, and seemed reluctant to leave."

At last he turned, and, standing before the great Cross of Sacrifice, he spoke from his heart words that those of us, Antony, who love our country and the glory of its language will cherish while we live :—

"For the past few days I have been on a solemn pilgrimage in honour of a people who died for all free men.

"At the close of that pilgrimage, on which I followed ways already marked by many footsteps of love and pride and grief, I should like to send a message to all who have lost those dear to them in the Great War, and in this the Queen joins me to-day, amidst these surroundings so wonderfully typical of that single-hearted assembly of nations and of races which form our Empire. For here, in their last quarters, lie sons of every portion of that Empire, across, as it were, the threshold of the Mother Island which they guarded, that Freedom might be saved in the uttermost ends of the earth.

"For this, a generation of our manhood offered itself without question, and almost without the need of a summons. Those proofs of virtue, which we honour here to-day, are to be found throughout the world and its waters—since we can truly say that the whole circuit of the earth is girdled with the graves of our dead. Beyond the stately cemeteries of France, across Italy, through Eastern Europe in well-nigh unbroken chain they stretch, passing over the holy Mount of Olives itself to the furthest shores of the Indian and Pacific Oceans—from Zeebrugge to Coronel, from Dunkirk to the hidden wildernesses of East Africa.

"But in this fair land of France, which sustained the utmost fury of the long strife, our brothers are numbered, alas! by hundreds of thousands.

"They lie in the keeping of a tried and generous friend, a resolute and chivalrous comrade-in-arms, who with

ready and quick sympathy has set aside for ever the soil in which they sleep, so that we ourselves and our descendants may for all time reverently tend and preserve their resting-places.

" And here, at Terlinchthun, the shadow of his monument falling almost across their graves, the greatest of French soldiers—of all soldiers—stands guard over them. And this is just, for side by side with the descendants of his incomparable armies they defended his land in defending their own.

" Never before in history have a people thus dedicated and maintained individual memorials to their fallen, and, in the course of my pilgrimage, I have many times asked myself whether there can be more potent advocates of peace upon earth through the years to come than this massed multitude of silent witnesses to the desolation of war. And I feel that, so long as we have faith in God's purposes, we cannot but believe that the existence of these visible memorials will eventually serve to draw all peoples together in sanity and self-control, even as it has already set the relations between our Empire and our Allies on the deep-rooted bases of a common heroism and a common agony.

" Standing beneath this Cross of Sacrifice, facing the great Stone of Remembrance, and compassed by these sternly simple headstones, we remember, and must charge our children to remember, that as our dead were equal in sacrifice, so are they equal in honour, for the greatest and the least of them have proved that sacrifice and honour are no vain things, but truths by which the world lives.

" Many of the cemeteries I have visited in the remoter and still desolate districts of this sorely stricken land, where it has not yet been possible to replace the wooden crosses by headstones, have been made into beautiful gardens which are lovingly cared for by comrades of the war.

" I rejoice I was fortunate enough to see these in the spring, when the returning pulse of the year tells of unbroken life that goes forward in the face of apparent loss and wreckage ; and I fervently pray that, both as nations

and individuals, we may so order our lives after the ideals for which our brethren died that we may be able to meet their gallant souls once more, humbly but unashamed."

Hard indeed must it be for any Englishman whose heart is quick within his bosom not to feel it beat faster with thanksgiving and pride as he reads the flawless periods of this glorious speech.

As the final word of consolation, sanctification, and benediction, closing the awful agony of the greatest of all wars, preserve, Antony, this magnificent threnody in your memory imperishable.

Your loving old

G. P.

XXXV

My dear Antony,

I have come now to the end of my citations for the present. My object, Antony, has been to rouse in your heart, if I can, a love, admiration, and reverence for the wonders to be found in the treasure-house of English prose literature.

I have only opened a little door here and there, so that you can peep in and see the visions of splendour within.

Some day perhaps, when you have explored for yourself, you may feel surprised that in these letters I have quoted nothing from Sir John Eliot, or Addison, or Scott, or Thackeray, or Charles Lamb, or De Quincey, or Hazlitt, or other kings and princes of style innumerable. Many, many writers whom I have not quoted in these letters have adorned everything they touched, but do not seem to me to reach the snow-line or rise into great and moving eloquence. Charles Lamb, for example, never descends from his equable and altogether pleasing level, far above the plain of the commonplace, but neither does he reach up to the lofty altitudes of the lonely peaks ; and if I began to quote from him, I see no obstacle to my quoting his entire works ! And of Addison, Johnson wrote, " His page is always luminous, but never blazes in unexpected splendour " ; and he adds, " Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."

In selecting such passages as I have in these letters

I have necessarily followed my own taste, and taste—as I said when I first began writing to you—is illusive. I could do no more than cite that which makes my own heart beat faster from a compelling sense of its nobility and beauty.

When I was young, Antony, I lived long in my father's house among his twelve thousand books, with his scholarly mind as my companion, and his exact memory as my guide; for more than a quarter of a century since those days I have lived in the more modest library of my own collecting, and have long learnt how much fine literature there is that I have never read, and now can never read. But, Antony, you may not find, in these crowded days, even so much time for reading, or so much repose for study as I have found, and therefore it is that I have offered you in these letters the preferences of my lifetime, even though it has been the lifetime of one who makes no claim to be a literary authority.

As you look back at those from whom you have sprung, you will see that for five generations they have been men of letters—many distinguished, and one world-famous; and though I myself am but a puny link in the chain, yet I may perhaps afford you the opportunity of hitching your wagon by and by to the star that has for so long ruled the destinies of our house.

Farewell, then, dear Antony; and if "the dear God who loveth us" listens to the benedictions of the old upon their children's children, may He guide and bless you to your life's end.

Your loving old

G. P.

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